

STILL THE GALAXY'S
BEST SELLING C64 MAG

A FUSION RETRO PUBLICATION

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COMMODORE



ICE HOT SUMMER ISSUE!
JASON PAGE SALIVATES ON SID
METAL DUST: MUST OR BUST?
VIVID VIDEO HOW-TOs!





I work for the New Republic Amnesty Program, and speaking of programs, my chosen computer is this modded Commodore 64. On Earth over in the Milky Way this is so advanced it won't exist for a long, long time.... But when they finally get it in 1982 AD, I'm betting it'll change many of their humanoids' lives forever. They might even make a whole magazine about it named after the sound my laser gun makes.

"PEW 64?"

Dr Pershing – Scientist – New Republic

Courtesy of The Mandalorian on Disney+



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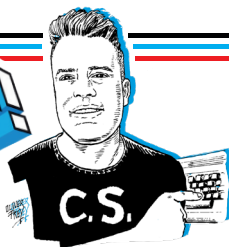
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Welcome, dear readers, to the glorious pages of ZZAP! 64. To summarise, our summery Issue 15 is here, packed with pixelated adventures, uproarious humour, and all things that make the C64 and ZZAP! 64 truly special. As you prepare to dive into our meticulously crafted content made exclusively for your gaming pleasure (yes really – you!), you'll note the Oliver Frey cover masterpiece from the original Issue 15 – one of my favourite pieces and such a vivid memory from my teenage years. For some reason...

On that note, it has been said recently that ZZAP! 64 conforms to the “mini skirt framework” style of writing; long enough to cover the important parts, but short enough to keep things interesting. In short, I agree.



This month, let's also shine the spotlight ('cos I've been ordered to) on the event that has C64 retrogaming enthusiasts buzzing with excitement – ZZAP! Live 2023! It'll literally be the most exciting thing happening that day at The Holiday Inn in Kenilworth. Finally being sent to Coventry is a good thing. Brace your braces for the inside scoop on this extraordinary gathering, even though Metro beat us to it as you can see!

Imagine over 50 Commodore systems transformed into themed Zones, each capturing a unique era of C64 brilliance. From the Early Years to the Classic Years and Beyond, erm, Years; embark on a nostalgic journey through the history of the C64.

Q&A sessions, panels, special guests, and competitions – it's got it all! As the sun sets, get ready for an unforgettable evening event filled with Commodorable gaming, captivating live sets, and more mind-blowing SID remixes than you can imagine (I can imagine about 64).

And the cherry lollipop on top – I won't be there! But don't fret, my friends, as my better half and I eagerly anticipate the arrival

of our first future ZZAP! fan by creating not Live 2023 but “Life 2023”, I'll be there in spirit. So, raise a glass and enjoy a drink on my behalf as you revel in the magic of ZZAP! Live. Rumour has it though that I may make an appearance via video message. Ah, I guess modern technology isn't all bad.

So, grab your joysticks (ooh Susan), count down the days, and prepare for a gaming experience like no other. I do believe it's possible to create new memories that will feel nostalgic in the future, and this may be one of them. Long live the C64, and long live the spirit of ZZAP! But wait, forget August joystick clicking and lollipop licking, there's an entire magazine waiting for you to enjoy right now; you'd better get flicking!

Christian Simpson
Editor



“THAT’S
A
‘THEC64’
METRO!”



COVERMOUNT MADNESS

Don't have sadness, enjoy our madness! It's another action-packed selection of exclusive C64 titles for your happiness. And we celebrate the scorching hot Issue 15 with the following (just don't let your floppy melt):



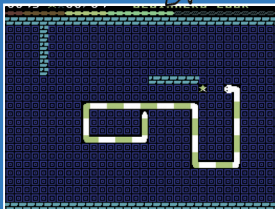
"SNAKES. WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE SNAKES?"



Awesome Slam Sibs Infinite Demo

Søren Trautner Madsen

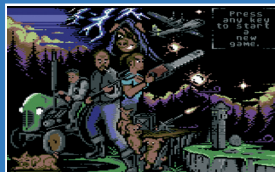
We kick off the covermount and pack a punch with this awesome (woah!) single player demo! There are 9 difficulty-levels to beat in this player vs AI demo version of the Smash Bros clone - Awesome Slam Sibs Infinite.



Snake Escape 64 Demo

CursorKeys

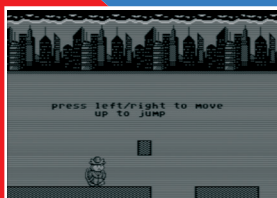
Navigate through the labyrinthine dreamscape, steering your ever-growing Simon [excuse me!? – Ed] in a star hunt for keys, unravelling the 'Dreamcatcher's' riddle, in this nostalgic nod to the C64 - not to mention Nokia - era's Snake game. Sss!



Kielbasa Empire Demo

Sepa, Juras, Crisps, Koval & MR.MELVIN

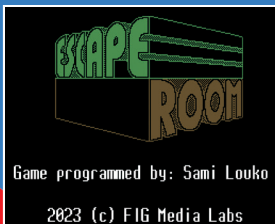
Set in rural Poland during times of hyperinflation and the end of communism, people have been left without jobs overnight as the government closed down state-owned agriculture companies. Kielbasa Empire's main character inherits a small farm with hopes of making a living and aspiring to farm crops, feed pigs, make Kielbasa (Polish sausage) and then sell it. Oink.



Paw Noir

Cat in the dark

Sacrifices must be made. A platformer where you beat levels using your own dead bodies! Me-ow!



Game programmed by: Sami Louko

2023 (c) FIG Media Labs

Escape Room

Finnish Gold Labs

An exciting maze-adventure game that features real time torch ray casting, a-mazing mazes, and catchy music!



Lunar City

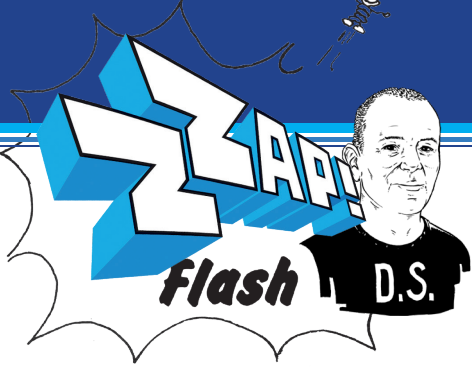
The New Dimension

Your home planet of Lunar is was a peaceful safe haven. That was until a discovery of a giant alien mothership hovering above the planet. [So just like Earth then. – Ed] Defend it by firing lasers from the Sentinels!

"I'VE ESCAPED!!
WAIT, WHERE AM I?"



Previous covermounts are available with silver membership here fusionretrobooks.com/pages/membership-bookshelf and via subscribing here patreon.com/zzapmagazine


 ZAP!
Flash D.S.

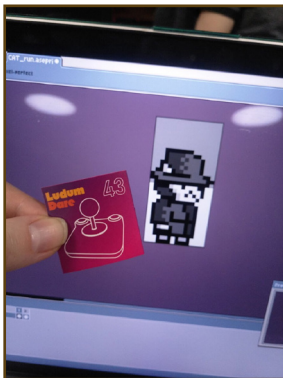
PAW NOIR

No you're not Australian, you are in fact a cute cat, and have to find your favourite yarn ball in a dark noir 30s city, filled with hostile rats and other obstacles. Of course you have nine lives, but unlike most real cats, you can even use your own corpses to get through the levels!

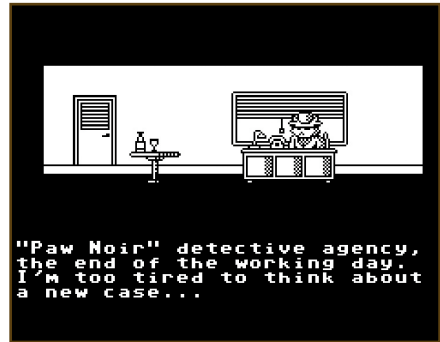
We obtained the deets direct from da devs:

What is the motivation behind this game and why C64 instead of, say, PS5?

Kirill: We came up with the idea of this game in December 2018 when Tim and I participated in Ludum Dare; a hackathon where you create the game from scratch in 48 hours. And you have to tie your game idea to the theme, revealed when the competition



starts - on this occasion, "Sacrifices must be made". I suggested we make a platformer where you beat levels using your own corpses, and Timofey came up with the rest.



Tim: The cat character with nine lives fitted the mechanics perfectly. I wanted to make him cute and expressive, as players would be sorry to sacrifice such a character. To create an unusual setting, I put the cat in the atmosphere of American noir films of the 30s. The yarn ball that the character had to pick up to complete the level was a kind of Maltese Falcon; a much-desired but equally unobtainable bonus.

Kirill: We completed the first version of the game in the 48 hours. It achieved second place at our local Ludum Dare gathering, and scored #286 out of 1747 submissions internationally.

Kirill: In 2021 was the Yandex Retro Games Battle. Previously a Spectrum-only development competition, they had expanded the list of 8-bit machines they accepted. When I told this to Tim, he immediately proposed [*How sweet!* – Ed] to port our game [*Oh*] to one of those. Tim and I had C64s in our collections, so we decided to port the cat to that.

Tim: Working under strict technical constraints made us invent unusual solutions and boost creativity. A crazy colour palette, graphics restrictions, character maps... Damn, this was a challenge! And we accepted it.



What else are you planning to add to the final version - other objects to pick up, weapons perhaps?

Tim: I will definitely improve the graphics. I want to add more detail to the levels, draw cutscenes, and redesign menus and credits. And, of course, redraw the yarn ball, as no one understood what it was. It's a YARN BALL! *[Don't get so wound up - Ed]*

Kirill: I want to address some UX issues and focus on the level design. The current mechanics have a lot of potential, and I can use them to create fun, challenging puzzles in the game.



Who is involved in making the game?

Kirill: Timofey came up with the game idea, designed all six levels, and created all the graphics in the game. My part was mostly coding.

Anna and Dmitry were the heroes who composed the soundtrack in a week with no prior knowledge of SID trackers. Anna composed the soundtrack in regular music software, and Dmitry learned how to use Goat Tracker 2 and arranged the soundtrack there.

When will you finish it and how will you make it available to us cool cats?

Kirill: I don't have any particular date in mind. We will release an improved version with ZZAP! 64's covermount, collect feedback, and see from there.

Tim: As for the distribution, there are many ways today. It's not just the Internet. You can make a cartridge or distribute the game on other media. Whether people download our game or pass it to each other on floppy disks, I'm sure *Paw Noir* will find its players.



"NICE KITTY"



ZZAP! 64 Micro Action | 7

FROM CATS TO...

Stranded Cats is an upcoming multiplayer split-screen adventure. You play as two kitties whose ship has crash-landed on an island. Pawfect. Go out and explore to find materials to fix it, and fight off monsters along the way. You have to work together to succeed, but because the game is split-screen, you are free to explore the island independently.



Siegfried Croes made this game to challenge himself and learn Assembly. His first C64 game experiment (a simple multiplayer arena shooter) was well-received at local events. The success led him to the decision to make another multiplayer game, this time more ambitious in terms of scope, gameplay, and visuals. A demo was created to showcase at Maker Faire Gent 2023, and is now available on his Patreon, where you can also find weekly updates on the game's development. Encouraged by the positive reactions both at the event and online, the demo will be developed into a full-fledged game!



In terms of features, the demo is limited to a map of 10x6 screens (192x96 pixels), but the plan is to make the full map at least twice this size. In the demo, there's only one type of enemy and materials can only be found by breaking boxes, but this will also be expanded upon. The positioning of these objects will be pseudo-random to add replayability. There are many more ideas for features, but the implementation will depend on available memory.

At the moment, it's too early to announce when the full version of *Stranded Cats* will be released. You can follow the game's development on Patreon and social media (see website for links: siegfriedcroes.com).



BRRING BRRING...

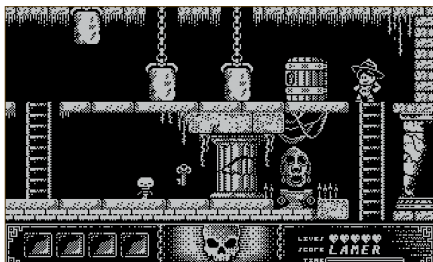
"PROMISE IT'S NOT
A PYRAMID SCHEME?"



I was woken up from my sleep by the sound of a phone that I hadn't heard in a long time. I had just returned from the ancient city of Tula where I had been exploring old Toltec structures. I instinctively picked up the handset and heard Margaret's sweet, familiar voice.

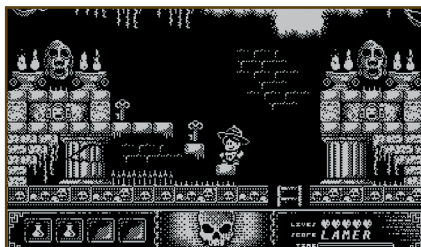
"Tony, are you going to sleep all day?"

TONY - Born for Adventure is the brainchild of coding maestro Maciej Malecki (T-Rex 64) and design virtuoso Rafal Dudek. Inspired by Rafal's 10-year-old son, who yearned for a game like Montezuma's Revenge, this heartfelt tribute to the Polish explorer Tony Halik promises thrills galore. Brace yourself for epic journeys across various platforms, as TONY ventures onto the C64, Amiga, Spectrum, and Atari XL computers!

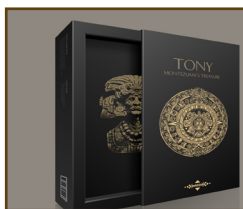


Set across six varied levels containing different graphics and sprites, put ZZAP! 64 down for just a moment and become immersed in the Jungle, Swamp, Montezuma's Castle, Catacombs, Hell, and finally, the Aztec Pyramid.

A demo of the game will be released exclusively on the ZZAP! 64 covermount (featuring *Montezuma's Castle*), then there will be a boxed edition of the completed game



towards the end of 2023! (This will be a limited run of 1200 copies across C64 and Atari, with distribution being performed by Retronics. The Amiga, ST, and Speccy versions will only be available as a digital download). In closing, Rafal comments, "Expect this game around Christmas time.



Special thanks to everyone who has contributed to this game, particularly the coders and musicians!"



THE UNIQUE ZZAP! REVIEW SYSTEM

Our leg-endarry system makes our reviews like no other. From Sizzlers to funky hairstyles (while stocks last) to Triple Reviewers, you saw it all here first. But in case you just came back up to the surface in a sub, here's how we think it works, and who they think they are:

Most games have THREE experienced reviewers, avoiding a skewed result due to one berk's quirks.

Every game is played expensively, erm I mean EXTENSIVELY. On a couple of occasions the cops called at ZZAP! Towers to see why the lights were on after 21:00! "Sorry Occifer, we have to reach the final boss for reader Jason!". (The reviewers were still arrested as was Jason's cat.)

Our reviewers meet up to argue for days about every percentage point printed, and are prepared to defend their final decision with tapes full of meeting recordings. Come over after 21:00.

Tip: Learn which reviewer shares YOUR tastes and you'll know if a game is worth spending your time or hard-earned Dogecoin on.

Ratings are constructively HONEST. Some posts on X say, "Don't give any new games low scores!". We say "wHaT a UseFuL mAg ThAt'D bE". BUT we appreciate how amazing it is that any games are out for a 40 year-old pooter & sincerely respect ANYONE who creates one.

That said, we know we can't please everyone all the time. We'd all do well to accept that simply, TASTES DIFFER. And that's what you'll find here. Taste. Here we'll prove it:



Andrew Fisher

Original Commodore Force contributor, Retro Gamer mag regular, C64 author, and C64 musician.

This month:

Rearranging his CDs, starting yet another new book project, and fighting the system to get back his benefit payments, grrr.

Robin Hogg

Hubby to mega retro and horror collector Shelly, plane breaker, and ex-tipster slash flight sim pilot at ZZAP! Towers.

This month:

Unsurprisingly, TotK. Also contemplating more Arkham Horror LCG and loving the effort people put into the PnP versions.

Mat Allen (aka Mayhem)

Original ZZAP! 64 contributor, #1 cart collector, and part of the GameBase64 preservation project.

This month:

Trying not to melt (or drown!) in the summer weather, The Ashes, and more work for the NDA digital retro project.

Paul Morrison

Former MAME record holder and unsuccessful ZZAP! job applicant who finally made it, just like Newcastle qualifying for the Champions League.

This month:

Being manic! Had loads to do in my real job and across all arms of Fusion Retro Books. Retro relaxed at NERG back on July 8th.

Christian Simpson

Writer with a love of retrogaming so problematic he had to start a YouTube. Made Commodore retro music before it was retro.

This month:

Setting up baby's room and trying to keep the doggo from thinking everything in it is for her, bless.



**TEST**

CURSED TOMB

Price: \$6 digital, €35 upwards physical

Developer: Protovision (2023)

Link: mysl.nl/NNnn



"READY TO RAID
THE CURSED
TOMB!"



Money, money, money, always sunny, in a rich man's world. This issue seems to have a litany of treasure gathering tropes, and *Cursed Tomb* is the first one. Fame, fortune, and the fact you are completely broke drive you onwards and downwards into this cursed place of 75 mazes. Enter the cursed realm: where return is unheard of. Bravery met with whispers of vanishing souls.

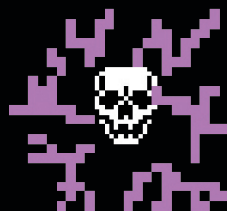
Unfortunately, the fear of the curse has gripped you so tightly that as soon as you start to run through each maze, you can't stop until you collide with a wall, barrier, or anything that halts your progress. Just make sure it's solid and not one of the energy beams, spear traps, or similar okay? Or else one of your lives goes

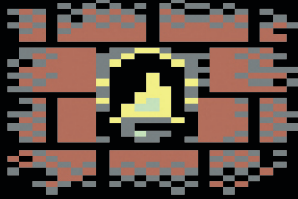


bye-bye to the big tomb high-high in the sky-sky.

Thankfully, you don't need to collect all the treasure on a level to be able to escape, but it certainly improves your score. Depending on the difficulty setting, your progress is also saved / password recorded every few levels, so you don't have

to start at the beginning each time. Thank curses for that!

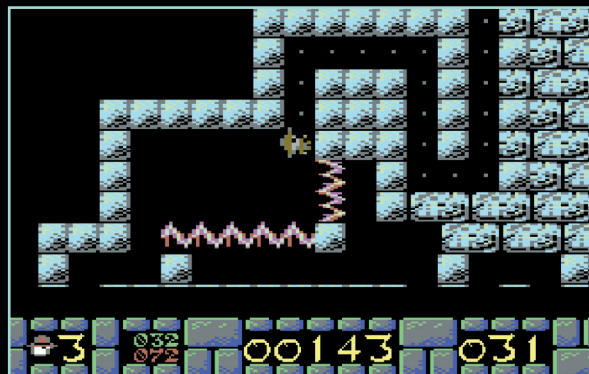




Well, where once we had an *Old Tower*, now we have a *Cursed Tomb*! So, what makes this better than the *Old* one? Well, there are a few things. There are more levels for a start, and they're more varied and interesting, so you'll get more play out of it. You don't have to collect everything to complete a level, so if you make a mistake, you can still progress. Also, it has scoring, and a high score table for each difficulty level, so you have a reason to come back to it. Oh, and there are usually several routes you can take, so with time, you can optimise your paths against the tight time limits for a better score. I really enjoyed this, and a curse on all those who don't!



This is a slightly different take on the "can't stop" puzzle genre as it is usually objects you are pushing that keep going as opposed to yourself. There is still some trial and error to navigating the later levels, partly due to the size of the play window although the trail of treasure helps guide you. Thankfully, you aren't hamstrung by having to collect all the treasure – hooray for small mercies – so you don't need a perfect run every single time, and the frequent passwords (or constant save on the cartridge edition) mean you don't have to go back over old levels too often. It's not a "wow" game, just a solid puzzler with some reasonable graphics and audio, that I enjoyed playing through.



"THANKS TO I.L.M. I LOOK THE SAME AS I DID FORTY YEARS AGO!"



GAME OVER

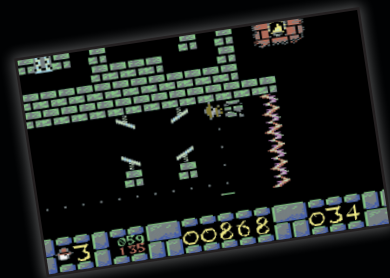
"SO THIS IS AN INDY GAME"





TEST

This adventurer moves around faster than Indy on his Zimmer frame, that's for certain. The first few levels ease you in, and then the hazards start to appear. While the graphics are quite good and the screen scrolls smoothly, at times the relatively small play area can be a challenge. But most of all, this is about timing and planning your route, observing what is ahead and collecting as many shiny things as you can. With 75 levels, it's a good job that there is a password system. Dial up your destiny, shove the cartridge into the mystical slot [!] and have a good rummage around these cursed tombs.



PRESENTATION: 73%

The menu and password system work well, three difficulty levels, and a continue option.

GRAPHICS: 65%

Effective and smooth scrolling but lacking in variety.

SOUND: 79%

Foreboding tribal title music gives way to some pretty chill(ing) in-game sounds.

HOOKABILITY: 89%

There's no treasure map but this is easy to follow and quite addictive.

LASTABILITY: 84%

Multiple difficulty levels should keep you returning for ages.

OVERALL 85%

Slide your way through this fun, cryptic, action puzzler.

"THANKS!"



8MIDAS

Developer: PCH/Unreal (2023)



A screenshot of the game 8 MIDAS. The main play area is a 10x10 grid of blocks. Each block has a number from 1 to 9. The blocks are arranged in a way that some numbers are repeated. The right panel shows the game status: LEVEL 001, TIMER 070, LIVES 000, and SCORE 00017. The game title '8 MIDAS' is displayed at the top right and bottom right.

8MIDAS

LEVEL 001
TIDER 034
LIVES 0XX
SCORE 01245

8MIDAS

Then there are five bosses to defeat on your way to 8Midar and your ultimate victory. Yahoo!
































KILLER
ERASER.70UCH MOVES HOME POSITION
LIVE
LOST7 LIVE
RENEWAL LIFE.7HREE IS LIFE.
ADD BODY AND RENEWAL IF FLYING

2010 10 10

```
ADD NEXT ENERGY TO GAME
STOP ENERGY MOVE FOR FEW SECONDS
DECREASE ENERGY SPEED
PLUS FIVE POINTS
PLUS TEN POINTS
ADD RENEWAL LIFE IN LEVEL
ADD FIVE SECONDS/STEPS
PLUS FIFTY POINTS
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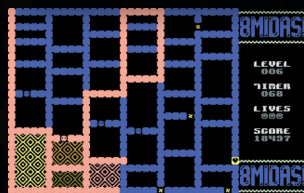
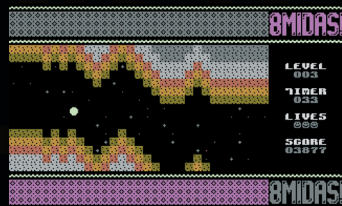

Well, I don't like it very much. I'm not a fan of Amidar, and I don't much care for *Flappy Bird*, and this has inferior versions of both. Although I like the pickups that are scattered around the Amidar maze, the controls are finicky and, in the first level at least, the colour scheme is annoying; I find it hard to tell which lines are coloured in and which aren't. Once you're past that, you have the flappy ball section, which is almost as difficult and hateful as *Flappy Goat* in *Goat Simulator*. If you manage to get through that, you do it all over again with different graphics. Well, you can, but I won't be, thanks.



Lots of colours, scrolling backdrops, it reminded me a little of vintage Minter initially. The first thing you will be confused about are what all the different pick-ups do, but that's what the in-game help is for. The second thing will be just how stingy some of the time limits are to complete each level. Not helped by the various enemies unlighting your path! The inter-level screens are part *Flappy Bird*, part endless cave, but provide a welcome break from the Amidar sections. However they are no less tough to complete. It would have been nice to have more frequent passwords, given those initial three lives can go quite quickly, but from a challenge perspective there's a lot to get your teeth into.



I love Amidar, so this was always going to appeal to me. What you can't see in the screenshots are the clever character animations, lending "scrolling" backgrounds and lots of extra detail/contrast to the action. The actual gameplay can be tough at times thanks to the time limit, but I liked how different levels have different rules. The *Flappy Bird* intervals can drag, although there are three different styles to mix things up. With fifty levels to get through, you are going to need cheats or codes to see all of them if you aren't superhuman. Perhaps the codes could have been every level instead of every five? But for a one-man effort, this is a cool little game that might not suit everyone.



PRESENTATION: 82%

Nice title screen, help info, passwords, and high score table.

GRAPHICS: 55%

Character-based graphics appear simple and occasionally garish, although there are some clever animations in there.

SOUND: 78%

Thumping title track and in-game level pieces, and a smattering of average sound FX.

HOOKABILITY: 73%

First few attempts will probably see game over on level 1 or 2.

LASTABILITY: 69%

Plenty of levels with five bosses to defeat, and password access, but it gets even tougher.

OVERALL 71%

More bronze than gold, it's worth it to copper feel if you're into Amidar.

GP Cars



Price: \$free digital

Developer: LHS (2023)

Link: mysl.nl/ikmV



The race is on! It's on the streets! And mountains, valleys, forests, and all over the place really. Jump in your car and see who's the best racer out there. Only a few races are available to start, but win and more will unlock (with extra vehicles to drive) along the way.

Races comes in two forms: Solo where you must complete the course within a certain time, or against CPU controlled opponents where only first place will do. The CPU cars are not "live" and merely act as competition, you can pass through them at will for the best racing line.

Different vehicles handle in different ways; cornering and so forth, but controls are always the same: Left and right to turn the vehicle, fire accelerates, and push up to activate nitro if available. Watch out for the differing terrain that can affect grip, and any obstacles as they can instantly wreck your beloved car. Gradual collisions with the landscape can also damage your motor sufficiently to require a restart.

Can you complete all twenty-five races and be crowned champion? Brrrrr!



Initial impressions were a game in the style of *Hot Rod* but what you get is racing against ghosts; there is no bump and bash with the other vehicles. Disappointment aside, it is extremely compelling and challenging, hair-pulling frustratingly at times with some instant "deaths", albeit constant one-more-go feelings, encouraged by the rapid ability to restart a race if you fail. And you will. So it would be nice if you could preserve that effort, but you cannot as there is no save option, meaning you must restart the game from the beginning every time you load up. I will readily admit using save states to continue my progress between sessions for this review, and people are already creating EasyFlash versions for the same reason. Such built-in absence does significantly harm my own score of this.





I always enjoy a good racing game, and

GP Cars is almost one. There's a decent amount of content, and some variety within the race formats, and I found it pretty compulsive for a while. However, it doesn't quite feel fast or racy enough for a racer, and turning is sluggish, which can result in collisions that don't feel like they're your fault. That said, the urge to hit fire and try again is definitely there, and I was compelled to unlock all the races and beat them. The game would benefit from a save facility, and would be massively enhanced if you could save your best times. That's where *GP Cars* could have really stood out... but as it is, it's bunched in the middle of the pack.

"IT'S A MIDDLE OF THE ROAD AFFAIR"



It's funny, but sometimes a C64 game captures so well the essence of a game on an entirely different system. In this case, it's *Gran Turismo*. Of course there's no 3D and as top down racers go it's pretty simple with no car upgrading, but what

GP does capture of *GT* is the sweat and tension of trying to beat the time limit of expert level AI cars, invariably by milliseconds. And with that comes the addictiveness as you repeatedly have "just one more go". It starts easy enough but the amount of time I've spent on some courses trying to perfect taking corners in a desperate attempt to win by a bumper is frankly disturbing. As you may gather, this is no Sunday drive, it's as brutal as *GT* at times and despite the lack of a save feature I love it.



PRESENTATION: 64%

Not much to speak of, although restarting races is rapid.

GRAPHICS: 75%

Great looking track select screen, detailed cars and interesting backgrounds - but the animation could be better.

SOUND: 71%

You won't tire of tire squeal or speech, plus an enjoyable tune while choosing the next "track".

HOOKABILITY: 81%

Very easy to play and a good difficulty curve to get you going.

LASTABILITY: 72%

Twenty-five tracks to conquer, but the lack of any save options is a blow-out.

OVERALL 77%

An entertaining racer that'd benefit from bodywork tweaks.

"FAST AND FURIOUS 64"



£9.95

BOUNDER



FREE With
BOUNDER
METABOLIS
"Is it a Man-
Is it a Bird"
(CBM 64/128
version only)

You've landed
back in the wacky world
of ZZAP! 64 Files, where each
instalment lasers in on one game,
unearthing the saga as it unfurled
in the hallowed pages of this here C64
mag. From sneak peeks to critiques,
Graeme Mason is our Indiana Jones,
raiding the archives to excavate every
juicy byte ZZAP! dished about each
game. This round our subject is the
brilliant bounce-'em-up from
those Gremlins of Graphics;
B o u n d e r .



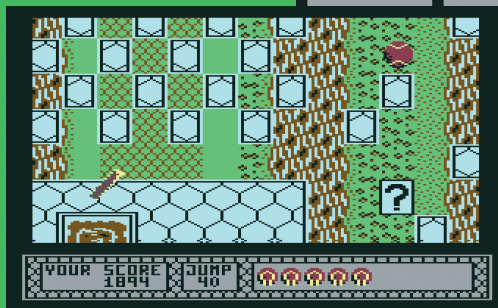
**Gremlin
Graphics**

CBM 64/128

The Game

Bouncer is a tennis ball! Betcha never played as a tennis ball before, right? Like most balls, *Bouncer* bounces, and this is how it moves up each level, jumping across the city's roofs to reach its destination, which is... who knows. And who cares? We did! But sadly for this bounding legend, there are nasty aliens out to stop it and numerous sharp hazards that'll put a hole in *Bouncer's* rubber skin. Fortunately, there are occasional power-ups to help the round fellow:

"CAN YOU GET IT OVER THE NET?"

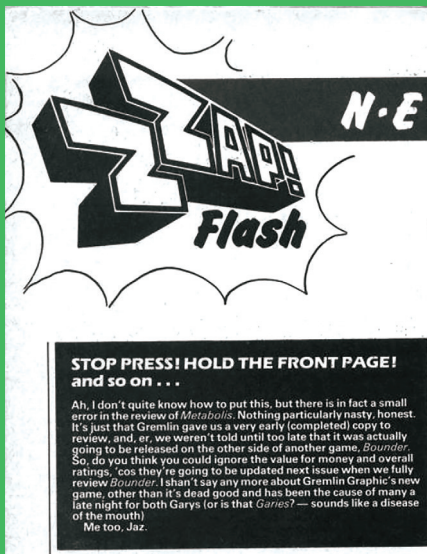


Squares with an arrow allow it to perform a mega-bounce while a teleport warps it to the next available teleport square. Finally, there are

the devious question mark squares that can be good or bad... dare you risk bouncing on these?!

Bouncer News Flash

Gremlin Graphics' game came out of nowhere, so there would be no *Bouncer* preview. However, it did get a little segment in the news section of issue 9 – although it was primarily about a different game; in this issue, we gave Gremlin's arcade adventure *Metabolis* a lukewarm reception and a final score of 50%. However, we weren't aware that Gremlin intended to release *Metabolis* on the flip side of another game – *Bouncer*. While our reviewers prepared to re-evaluate the value for money and overall ratings, it did perhaps occur to many readers that the poor standard of *Metabolis* might be why it appeared on the B-side of another game. At the end of the news item, Lloyd Mangram gave a little clue as to the quality of *Bouncer*: "I shan't say any more about Gremlin Graphic's [sic] new game, other than it's dead good and has been the cause of many a late night for both Garys." [Playing with their balls well into the night no doubt – Ed]



BOUNDER

Marketing

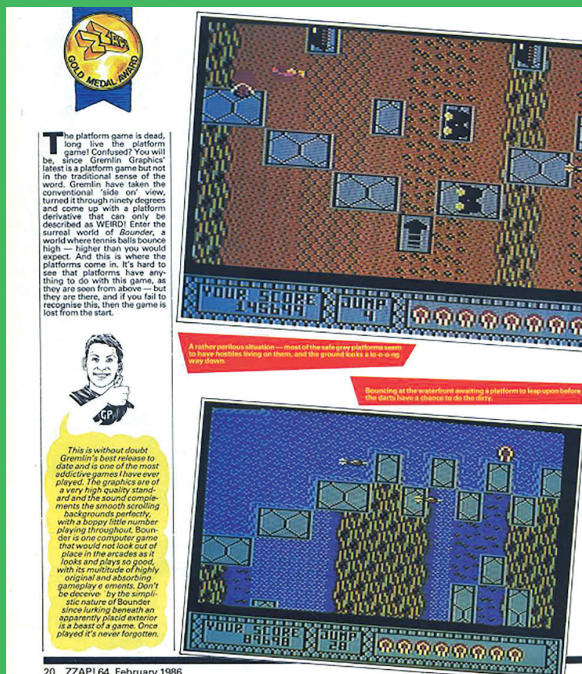
In the following issue, number 10, February 1986, ZZAP! 64 went *Bounder mad*. We'll get to the review shortly but first, let's look at the advert from the same issue. The anthropological tennis ball is taking centre court, springing upwards from a building below.

There's a clue to the different types of squares and enemies you'll encounter in the game and a bold proclamation that *Bounder* is "B-b-b-Bound to be a hit". The blurb in the top left confirmed our enthusiasm and the inclusion of an extra game, *Metabolis*.



The Review

"The platform game is dead, long live the platform game!" was our contradictory claim at the start of *Bounder's* glorious review. The statement was accurate: *Bounder* takes the traditional side-on platform view, flipping the action above the player character. Despite scoring big with *Monty On The Run*, we quickly declared *Bounder* the Sheffield software house's finest hour. "Along with being a brilliant arcade game, *Bounder* has another strong point," reported someone called Julian Rignall. "It's one of the most frustrating and maddeningly addictive programs yet." Gremlin's game ticked many boxes for the review team: fun to play, original, and good-looking. "Bounder... would not look out of place in the arcades," stated a bold Gary Penn. "...it looks and plays so good with its



multitude of highly original and absorbing gameplay elements." How would the

team's glowing remarks be reflected in the final scores?

The Verdict

Sound (90%) and Presentation (91%) brought up the rear, but the rest of the categories combined to thrust *Bounder* into the upper echelons of ZZAP! 64 scores. The charming visuals notched 95%, while Lastability scored 97%, with Hookability and Value For Money registering an amazing 98%. The final overall score of 97% duly secured *Bounder* Gold Medal status. "An absorbing, demanding and totally innovative approach to the ageing platform genre", it concluded.

Presentation 91%

No options but the game is extremely well thought out and executed.

Graphics 95%

Exquisite two speed parallax scrolling gives an unusual vertical 3D effect.

Sound 90%

Both music and sound FX are great and suit the game exceedingly well.

Hookability 98%

Extraordinary visual approach combined with some unique gameplay elements and an original control method make *Bounder* highly addictive to play.

Lastability 97%

The compulsive nature of the game brings you back again, and again, and again

Value for Money 98%

Two games for the price of one, even though one of them, *Metabolis*, is average.

Overall 97%

An absorbing, demanding and totally innovative approach to the ageing platform formula.

Bound-er Win

The same issue of ZZAP! 64 brought an exclusive Gremlin Graphics *Bounder* compo. In an inevitable 'Spot The Ball' competition, readers had to guess where the *Bounder* had just fallen by marking each screen with a tweet I mean X. For twenty-five lucky readers, a *Bounder* sweatshirt awaited...



Bound-er Not Win

The 1986 ZZAP! 64 Readers' Awards took place in issue 23, just over one year after *Bounder's* release. The ZZAP! team expected *Bounder* to perform strongly, but the game disappointed, despite being narrowly defeated by Elite's *Ghosts*

'n' *Goblins* in the Best Platform Game category. *Bounder* – and indeed its publisher – were nowhere to be seen elsewhere in the awards. Could it be that the readers didn't quite share our enthusiasm for Gremlin's bouncy ball game?

BEST PLATFORM GAME

GHOSTS 'N' GOBLINS

Elite

BOUNDER

Gremlin Graphics

CAULDRON II

Palace Software

HERCULES

Alpha Omega

THE SACRED ARMOUR OF ANTI-RIAD

Palace Software

It was a hard-fought battle, but *Ghosts 'n' Goblins* managed to hold off *Bounder* by 12.5% to 11.5%. Palace collected 8% of the votes with *Cauldron II*, and 5.5% with *Antiraid* – split by Alpha Omega's visually and aurally obscure, but highly playable *Hercules* which claimed 7%.



A Controversial Medal

Remember in the last issue, we posthumously gave another springy game, *Wizball*, its Gold Medal? Could the opposite happen this month? Reader Richard Gibbs of Altrincham brought some combative points to Lloyd's attention in issue 15 – it seemed that rival mag C&VG [you mean “inferior publication” – Ed] had been casting disparaging remarks about our Bounder high score. “I can’t really comment,” replied an unequivocal Lloyd. “I’m afraid I never read the other

organs (much anyway).” Richard’s fellow reader, Mike Birkett, went even further in the same issue, suggesting that games became a Gold Medal because we were also running a competition on them. “To quote Mr Liddon,” came Lloyd’s reply, “what a load of pish, if not piffle and drivel.” With plenty of competitions about for poor games such as *Friday The 13th* and *The Rocky Horror Show*, it was a baseless accusation whose “flimsy ... silly accusations” Lloyd duly dismissed.

FRAUDULENT COMPS?

Dear ZZAP!
Recently in ZZAP! I discovered that when prizes are being given away by a company then the game itself in that issue of ZZAP! gets a remarkable review. Does this mean that if someone sends a dozen games in for a competition then that game is named a ZZAP! 64 Gold Medal. Are you that desperate for games for competitions?

Some recent examples of this ‘fraud’ are *Mercenary*, *Bounder* and *The Eidolon*. If this is the case then I feel very sorry for you and I will start an appeal for the ZZAP! Competition Fund.

Mike Birkett, Bramhope, Leeds

To quote Mr Liddon, what a load of pish, if not piffle and drivel. Friday the 13th also had a competition, Red Arrows, Rocky Horror Show, Roland’s Flat Race, Confuzion, Graham Gooch’s Test Cricket all had competitions, to name a few. Check out their reviews and make sure of your facts aren’t flimsy before flinging silly accusations around.

LM

Charting Bounder

Bounder bounced around the ZZAP! 64 Reader Charts for a few months, reaching a peak of number six in issue 14. Six months later, it dipped to its lowest position of 20 before disappearing for good the following month. Out!



ZZAP! READERS TOP 30 For JUNE 1986

Chart Voting Draw Winners
Winner (£50 worth of software plus T-shirt): Paul Robinson, Yonkers, Berkshire. Runners up: ZZAP! T-shirt and cap: Damien Campbell, Tachina, Surrey; Simon Hersey, Bushy Park, Wilt; Midlands: Richard Vidal, Kewell Green, London NW10; Chris Dickson, Epsom, Surrey.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| 1. (1) PARADOX (10%)
MUSGRAVE, C. 1985. £12.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 90% | 11. (6) LITTLE COMPUTER PEOPLE
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 21. (1) ZODIAC
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% |
| 2. (4) URIDROM (8%)
MUSGRAVE, C. 1985. £12.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 12. (3) COMMANDO
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 75% | 22. (1) HARBALL
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% |
| 3. (5) MERCENARY (7%)
MUSGRAVE, C. 1985. £12.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 13. (8) RAMBO
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 23. (10) FIGHT NIGHT
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% |
| 4. (2) WINTER GAMES (7%)
MUSGRAVE, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 14. (30) THING ON A SPRING
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 24. (1) SCARABAEUS
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% |
| 5. (4) SUMMER GAMES II (5%)
MUSGRAVE, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 15. (11) BALLBLAZER
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 25. (1) KIK START
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% |
| 6. (18) BOUNDER (4%)
MUSGRAVE, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 16. (21) DROPZONE
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 26. (1) ELEKTRAGLIDE
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% |
| 7. (9) WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST (4%)
MUSGRAVE, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 17. (16) MONTY ON THE RUN
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 27. (29) NODES OF YESOD
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% |
| 8. (12) PITSTOP II (3%)
MUSGRAVE, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 18. (17) KUNG-FU MASTER
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 28. (24) REVS
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% |
| 9. (23) THE EIDOLON (3%)
MUSGRAVE, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 19. (13) WHO DARES WINS II
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 29. (15) KRONIS RIFT
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% |
| 10. (7) ELITE (2%)
MUSGRAVE, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 20. (14) ROCK 'N' WRESTLE
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% | 30. (22) HYPERSPORTS
DUNN, C. 1985. £14.95 disk.
ZZAP! rating 80% |

Tips, Maps, Scores And More

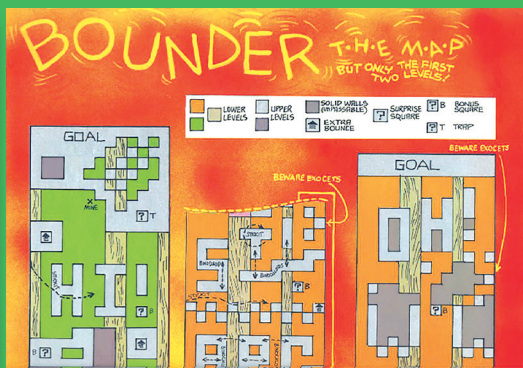
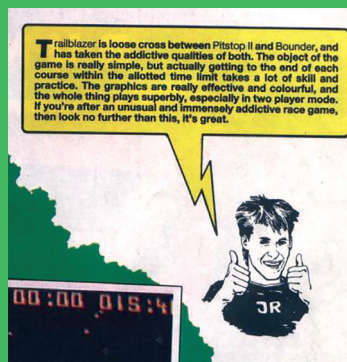
Issue 11 brought *Bounder's* debut in the Scorelord and a helpful map of its first two levels. In the following issue (12, April 1986), we printed a nifty cheat mode, while maps to the next two levels appeared in issue 13. As news of a sequel appeared in the summer of 1986, *Bounder* featured as one of six Gremlin games in a bargain offer inside

issue 17 and as one of our "Stocking Filler" games in the Christmas Special of ZZAP! 64. In the same issue's review of another Gremlin game, *Trailblazer*, *Bounder* was inevitably cited as an influence – as far as the ZZAP! 64 team were concerned, this was one classic game that was not to be forgotten.

BOUNDER (Gremlin)

While we're on the subject of cheat modes, how about one for 'the most compulsive game I've ever played'? On the title screen, hold down the following keys for approximately 30 seconds... 1, Q, A, Z and SPACE

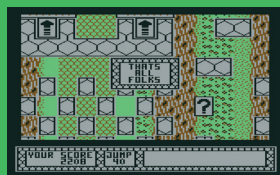
The border will change colour to indicate that the cheat mode is operative. You will now have infinite balls to play with.



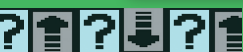
Final Thoughts

Fun and innovative, *Bounder* won game, set, and match in the pages of ZZAP! 64. Yet while it is undoubtedly an excellent game, its high level of difficulty meant that many readers didn't quite get the *Bounder* hype.

Did Gremlin games serve an ace that deserved every gleam of its shiny Gold medal? Or did we, as inferior publication C&VG suggested [*that's better – Ed*], overrate *Bounder*?



Sooo, are we going to reduce the score here in the opposite way we awarded *Wizball* a Gold Medal last time? Find out in *Ed's Last Word* on the final page of the mag. Ooh the suspense!





BACK

REVIEW

Mat Allen et al take a look back at a game released in ZZAP!-less times! The horror!

METAL DUST

Price: £8.65

Developer: Protovision / Welle:Erdeball (2005)

Link: bit.ly/3Q5OHHj



"A ROUNDOFF ENTERTAINMENT. METAL EXPECTATIONS."



In the 1990s, *Creative Micro Designs* was a major hardware seller for the C64. It designed one of the ultimate add-ons for the computer – the SuperCPU. This was a 25MHz W65C816 processor with additional memory, living in a cartridge. And so Protovision set out to create a showcase of the add-on's power with German band Welle:Erdeball (who use SID sounds in their compositions) composing the sampled soundtrack. The latest versions of the VICE emulator can now recreate the SuperCPU,

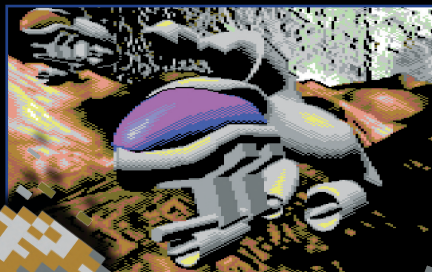
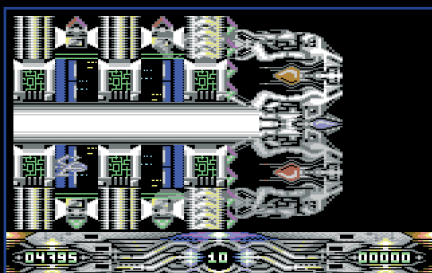
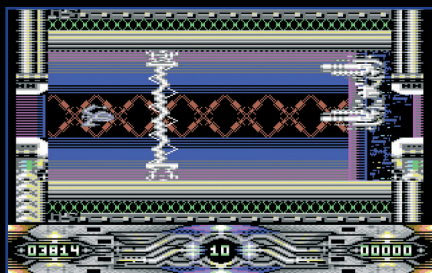
allowing a wider audience to experience the game. Bet ya didn't know that eh? You're welcome.

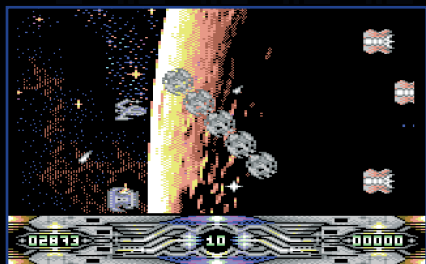
In the game, Commander LaserRay is searching for the New World in his Full Metal Megablaster Mk II. Starting in the Asteroid Belt, he must fight past the forces of the Rogue Pirate Empire. Fortunately, the ship is equipped with a Phaser that can be upgraded to a Twin Phaser, Cobalt Blaster, or Radium Emitter – with each able to gain more power. Other add-ons include the

Guided Missiles, Reverse Fire, and diagonally firing Quardo Laser. Holding down Fire charges the Full Metal Megablast to do more damage. Huge end-of-level baddies await, as the Commander flies on through a Space Station, over an Alien Planet home to Species 8173, and finally deep into the Thalian Centre for Temporal Research. Now that is deep.



Hold onto your joysticks, folks, because *Metal Dust* takes the humble C64 to a whole new level! This game catapults us into almost Amiga territory with jaw-dropping graphics and epic sound effects 'n' speech. The bosses are downright grimace-level daunting, with sprites as big as the SuperCPU itself. *Metal Dust* not only challenges you, but also guides you with familiar gameplay mechanics. The only downside? It's a bit short, but with over 3MB of data packed onto four disks worth, it's an incredible feat, and any more would've been frankly ridiculous. And let's not forget the cinematic ending that rivals many Amiga titles... wait what magazine is this?! This game proves that the Commodore 64 (with a little help) can stand tall alongside its more powerful younger siblings. *Metal Dust* is a mental must.



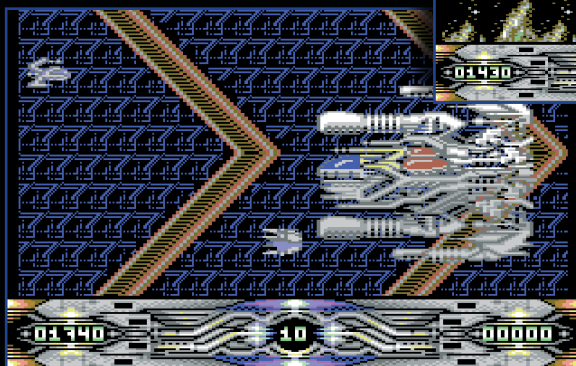
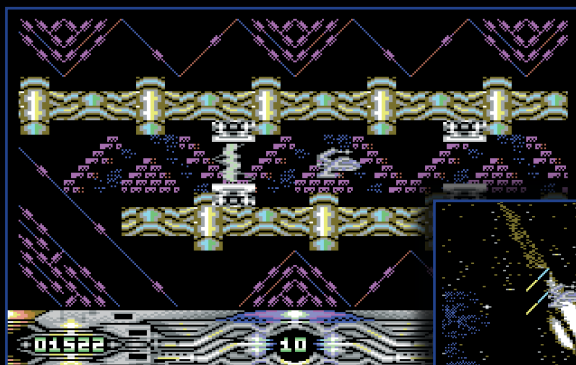


Barely a minute into playing *Metal Dust* you realise Knights of Bytes' remit for the design was to out-Trenz some of Manfred Trenz's most seminal output, and boy are your senses obliterated. And so will your ship be if you don't dodge the screen-filling asteroid that hurtles past! I love *Enforcer*, and this is like the best love letter to that gem, with some very *Turrican* and Giger-like moments sprinkled throughout, especially level 3. The SuperCPU helps shift the graphics around with some fabulous parallax sections, and ludicrously fast scrolling sections, but the extra RAM completely expands the scope of the boss designs. Just when you think you've beaten one, along comes another! There are only four levels, so the base difficulty is quite steep (thankfully you are given plenty of lives), and you really need JiffyDOS for loading. Otherwise, now emulation supports the SuperCPU there is no excuse not to try the game out and experience something familiar and yet utterly staggering.





TEST



There is no doubting the power of the SuperCPU once you have experienced *Metal Dust*. The first level's massive asteroid flying past, the sampled music, and the number of enemies onscreen, pay testament to the co-processor. The gorgeous transparency effect on the end-of-level boss looks magical for an 8-bit computer. But be warned, this game is tough! It will take persistence and continues to get past even the first level, and even I struggled to do that on the brief chances I had to play this back in the 2000s. Now it can be emulated, it is worth experiencing if you are into shoot 'em ups. The later levels do lack a little polish in places, which is understandable given the lengthy development time involved. But it stands proud alongside "standard" C64 games such as *Turrican* and *Enforcer* (Fullmetal Megablasters). There are times it feels like a lost Manfred Trenz game, which is high praise...



PRESENTATION: 91%

One or two players, hidden difficulties, clean status bar, cut scenes, and lengthy end sequence.

GRAPHICS: 95%

The sheer size and number of enemies dazzle; it's the best of Katakis, Enforcer, and Turrican, dialled up to 25 MHz.

SOUND: 93%

Some thrashing Huelsbeck inspired themes with plenty of sampled speech.

HOOKABILITY: 90%

The first level proves tricky but the compulsion to see more is there.

LASTABILITY: 92%

Four large levels to defeat, meaning plenty to get your teeth into, and with enough lives to allow sufficient progression.

OVERALL 94%

An inspired SuperCPU-powered shoot 'em up, and one of the best on the C64 ever.



GAMES THAT WEREN'T BUT ARE NOW...

Those games that got lost in the trenches of time, now dug out and released to the fans of C64 gaming today! This issue, Paul Morrison et al look at 1991's *Bloo's Magic Trip* by Microvalue.

BLOO'S MAGIC TRIP

Price: \$free

Developer: Gareth Taft (1991)

Link: mysl.nl/DmxM



Step into the enchanted world of the Magic Forest, where Bloo the owl faces a fungal invasion! We've all been there. For Bloo, Nasty Mushrooms plummet from the sky, threatening to squash him. Bloo's agility allows him to leap left and right, scaling obstacles, attempting to stomp on those pesky shrooms. He's not an ordinary owl; he can manipulate scenery blocks, pulling them towards himself to rearrange the stage strategically.

Bloo's mission intensifies as he encounters magical barriers that change colours upon landing. Time ticks away, and if the barriers don't change different colours, they'll drop when the timer expires. Can you aid Bloo in eliminating the nasty fungi [make your mind up - Ed] before time

runs out? Bonus points if so.

Visionary Gareth Taft Bloo I mean drew inspiration from *Jack Attack*. Despite Zeppelin Games initially rejecting Bloo in 1991, fate had a different plan. Years later, Gareth rediscovered the disk, generously sharing

it online for free. Thanks to *Games That Weren't 64* and Frank Gasking, Bloo, historical material, and Gareth's creation story, have been preserved for generations to come, so don't be Bloo.

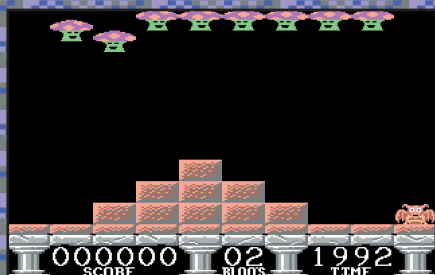


I first played this a long time ago, probably not that many years after getting hold of its seminal inspiration on cartridge, way back in the annals of history before I started collecting the lumps of silicon. The spinning mushrooms are somewhat trippy, and after

the first few screens you might need some to work out how to progress - level 5 being a quick demonstration of ruthlessly putting the boot in to your poor, cute owl, on top of the threat of acid and accidentally squishing yourself by pushing a block. At least it feels more responsive, and you have more opportunity to block the fungi from squashing you. Not so much I'd rather Jack (Attack) than Fleetwood Mac, but Betty Bloo doing the do. [Oh he definitely tried the wrong mushrooms - Ed]



"NOT AT ALL SURE ABOUT THAT STROGANOFF!"



The classic *Jack Attack* has not had many imitators over the years – but this is my favourite. The quirky idea of being able to rearrange the level is not something you see in many games, and squashing the magic mushrooms with your cute owl is a lot of fun. The challenge does ramp up quite quickly, and sometimes you have little time to make your first move leading to some frustrating levels. But with the option to choose a starting level, you can see more of the game and have a lot of fun shoving blocks around. This is quite a trip.



Do you know what? I'd never played *Jack Attack* before writing this review. Knowing that this game was based on that classic, I had to right that wrong, and having done so I can see that this is a really nice version. In fact, I'd say it plays better. It's a simple premise, but it's quite good fun to go round stomping and squashing. Being able to use the landscape to squish critters adds something extra to the game, although it's easy to mess that up! It's far from sophisticated (if it had been picked up, I'm sure a software house would have tarted up the graphics and sound), and I wouldn't exactly say it's magic, but it's definitely well worth playing.



PRESENTATION: 74%

Level select option, and a high score table.

GRAPHICS: 38%

Very basic sprites and levels, though they do have some charm.

SOUND: 24%

Nothing more than simple sound effects.

HOOKABILITY: 77%

Fans of *Jack Attack* will feel instantly at home with this one.

LASTABILITY: 78%

Stomping proves compulsive, and there's always a new high score to aim for.

OVERALL 78%

Despite being horribly dated, the entertaining gameplay of *Bloo* shines throo.

"IS THERE 'SHROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT?"



ZZAP! 64 RADAR - 12 MONTHS OUT!

Release dates subject to change (estimations sourced from the developers where possible!)

SNK vs. CAPCOM



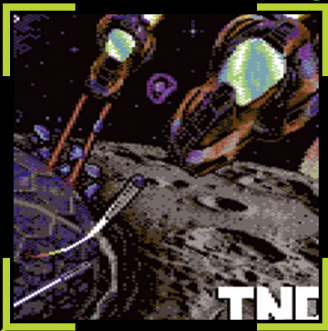
Final polishing is being performed by RetroGL to this eagerly awaited fighter as well as a C128 version with stage scrolling!
FIGHT!

TONY



Tony - Born for Adventure.
A monochrome platformer set across 6 levels: Jungle, Swamp, Catacombs, Aztec Pyramid, Montezuma's Castle, and Hell.

Lunar City



Defend the planet Lunar is against an alien invasion by firing lasers from Lunar City's Sentinels in this covermount exclusive brought to you by The New Dimension.





Rocky & Co



Inspired by The Goonies, *Rocky & Co* is the sequel to Rocky Memphis - The Legend of Atlantis. In this follow up by ICON64, control 3 different characters to work out room puzzles.

Briley Witch Chronicles 2 is a Japanese-inspired RPG based on the Briley Witch series of novels by Sarah Jane Avory.

The sequel follows the adventures of Briley and Smokey, her grumpy talking cat.



TECHNICAL BIT IN THE MIDDLE

As Alan “a-ha” Partridge famously said, “The sun always shines on TV”, but only if we attach our Commodore 64 to it. OPEN 15,8,15,”I” to set up some clever devices that will give you an image so sharp you could cut yourself on it. Careful now...

S-VIDEO / COMPOSITE

RETRORGB.COM

If you have an older TV (most CRTs and some flat panels) that has an S-Video and Audio inputs, all you need is a cable and you’ll have a pretty great setup. Some people gripe about issues but in my experience it’s more than fine, and anyway isn’t this how the C64 was designed to be played. No S-Video? You could look for the inferior Composite (yellow RCA) input instead. VGA input only? Options exist like the Turbo Chameleon to take care of that. There’s a great guide here too: bit.ly/3r5Y9jA

- + Works out of the box (literally if the cable is in your box!) as intended by Commodore whoever they are, image quality isn’t as “good” as HDMI but with pixelated C64 games that can actually improve the overall effect, you may already have the cable laying around in your drawer of wire snakes.
- Not as crisp as HDMI, the lack of an adapter means there’s no settings to play with, no firmware updates – what you see is what you get, steer clear of RF output by the way.



Can Buy It?	Yes
Can Build It?	Yes
Compatibility:	Very High
Cost:	Low

FRAMEMEISTER XRGB MINI

EBAY.US/ZJY88A

This was (and for some still is) the pinnacle of video upscalers, and it’s still a mystery to us why the Meisters of Frame discontinued it. Output gets filtered and enhanced to the point it can look like an emulator it’s that good (if that’s your cup of Java). If you can find one cheaper than the other options here then grab it fast.

- + Unrivalled (albeit filtered) output appearance, interlace effect, output resizing (2X etc.), more ins/outs than you’d ever need – including HDMI passthrough making it perfect as a hub for a retro collection.
- Hard to find, expensive, no recent firmware updates, discontinued.



Can Buy It?	Yes
Can Build It?	No
Compatibility:	Very High
Cost:	Very High

OSSC + KORYUU

VIDEOGAMEPERFECTION.COM

The OSSC (Open Source Scan Converter), affectionately crafted by Finnish engineer Markus Hienkari aka “Marqs”, is a retrogaming gem. To use it with the C64’s S-Video output it must however be paired with a Koryuu or similar transcoder to, y’know, transcode. With that done, the package offers top notch video quality, albeit with a little more work and cost than other options that are appearing.

- + line doubles with “no” input lag aka latency (actually a few nanoseconds but most humanoids won’t notice), multiple inputs including SCART, firmware of both devices gets updates.
- low stock due to FPGA shortages, more hassle, bulkier/messier duo of hardware pieces, multiple vendors/cases/options can get confusing, touted “Pro” model combining transcoder has yet to surface.



Can Buy It?	Yes
Can Build It?	Yes
Compatibility:	High
Cost:	Medium

RETROTINK 2X-PRO / 5X-PRO

RETROTINK.COM

RetroTINK is the brainchild of engineer Mike Chi, and named after his rabbit. That’s not all folks. Their 2X-Pro line-doubler impresses, converting retro-console signals with minimal lag and distortion, and minimal cost. The 5X-Pro however is the de facto option if your wallet can stomach it, featuring full automatic settings, 1080p, and more. Also, why does your wallet have a stomach?

- + Works out of the box without hassle, firmware upgraded, superb compatibility, with the 5X-Pro offering: automatic optimal phase algorithm, custom FPGA deinterlacing, seamless resolution switching.
- Earlier models could be glitchy here at ZZAP! Towers but no sign of that lately, cost of 5X-Pro can be prohibitive and shipping charges seem high.



Can Buy It?	Yes
Can Build It?	No
Compatibility:	Very High
Cost:	High

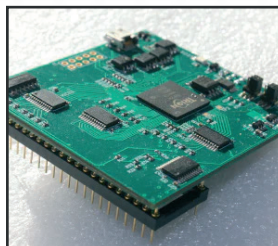
TECHNICAL BIT IN THE MIDDLE

VIC-II KAWARI (LARGE):

ACCENTUAL.COM/VICII-KAWARI

A newer option we never would've dreamed of a few years ago is Randi Rossi's incredible VIC-II Kawari; an HDMI replacement for the VIC-II chip itself. Get the Large board and you have a mini-HDMI output socket right there on your new VIC-II "chip", ready to output to your modern TV. This really closes the gap between real C64 hardware and clones like the Ultimate64 or THEC64.

- + Amazing value, supports PAL & NTSC with software configurator (D64 file), firmware updated, brings the C64 up to lossless HDMI quality, negates need for Lumafix jailbar mod, adds 80 column mode.
- There may or may not still be some titles that don't work 100% (but firmware is regularly updated), retro purists may not like the HDMI inside their C64.



Can Buy It?	Yes
Can Build It?	No
Compatibility:	High
Cost:	Low

GENERIC HDMI UPSCALERS:

AMAZON.CO.UK & OTHERS

Yes these are cheap, and make impressive claims, but you'll soon be regretting your purchase while noticing heavy duty lag / latency, video ghosting, and other issues. Click fire at just the right time? Tough, it was already too late. Avoid these options and invest in something with lower latency from this guide.

- + Cheap as chips (literally), but you get what you pay for.
- Bags of lags, video ghosties, fault-prone prunes, misleading scammy claims.



Can Buy It?	Yes
Can Build It?	No
Compatibility:	Low
Cost:	Low

CLOSE 15 So, which device is recommended? If you don't mind HDMI in your C64 get the Kawari. Otherwise, opt for the best RetroTink option you can afford (and consider a Lumafix 64/128 or VIC-II² PAL/NTSC switcher if you have jailbars in your image). There are other contenders on the horizon too such as Pixel Fx Morph or OSSC Pro, but still no sign of when (or if). Or, you could just go for a full HDMI clone C64 such as the Ultimate64 or THEC64, but then we're really blurring the lines, and the last thing you want with video output is blurry lines.

MEGA65

CORNER

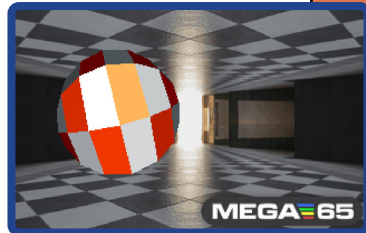


MegaPoly



"MEGA WHEE!"

Mirage (Lars Verhoeff) is one of the prominent C64 demo sceners exploiting the MEGA65 as a demo platform. Since our last issue, he has released **MegaPoly**, a demo that is drawing polygons, leveraging the Direct Memory Access (DMA) controller. Mirage also shows off his balls a bit further (corrr!) with his version of the Amiga Ball, explaining on GitHub that "this is not just a palette cycle like the Amiga version". In addition to the poly, the demo plays a MOD at the same time (yes, the MEGA65 can play MODs!).



Download: bit.ly/46yE99o - Source: bit.ly/3O1VFeW



Mega Fourplay

The MEGA65 includes two joy ports. But... do you have more than one friend?

The MEGA65 founder and hardware designer, **Paul Gardner-Stephens**, designed a joystick port expansion interface that connects to the cartridge port (bit.ly/44cBHUi), and if you know your way around electronics, you can make your own.

Thanks to **Jim 64** from **BIT Zeal**, you can buy a pre-assembled four-player joystick interface for the MEGA65. Jim has also packaged a "Four Fun" disk of four-player games to get you and your friends off to a flying start.

Further information: bit.ly/46yqOxV



C64 for MEGA65 Version 5 out!

Experience the C64 with greater compatibility on your MEGA65! **Version 5 includes:**

- 1) Joystick port support including mice and paddles
- 2) Expansion port support for C64 cartridges: Games, Freezers, Fast loader cartridges, REUs (inc. 512KB 1750 REU), Multi-Function Flash Cartridges, .CRT cartridge files
- 3) IEC port support: Attach real 1541 & 1581 drives, printers, plotters, or modern devices such as the SD2IEC or Ultimate-II+
- 4) Simulation of a 6) Dual SID / Stereo SID experience.

Download the core and go "Corrr!": bit.ly/3O0IgDL

Ordered a MEGA65 and excitedly awaiting arrival? Word is it's due in the latter half of 2023 and will be shipped with the latest firmware upgrade pre-installed for your tinkering pleasure. Some people have received a customs declarations form from Trenz (this is not spam though some have landed in said folder, and it needs to be filled out). Said form is randomly issued for goods leaving Germany to other countries so now you know. For more info point your mouse (or any rodent) at: mega65.org



rambler

Price: \$free digital

Developer: Stepz (2023)

Link: mysl.nl/VETz



There has been a spate of “escape the hazards” type games recently, and *Rambler* is the next one on the block to be examined. The concept is quite simple: Don’t die, collect all the stars, and get to the exit. Easier said than done. In front of you lies a cornucopia of insta-death pitfalls and enemies, just waiting to zap you into oblivion. All have their patterns to learn and be avoided or destroyed where possible.

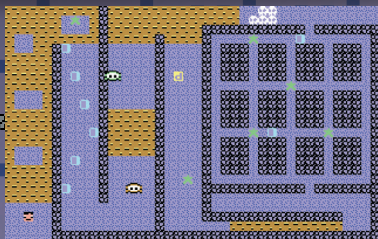
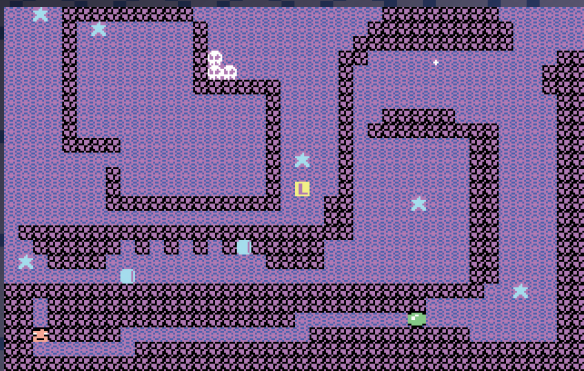


Fortunately, there are a few power-ups available along the way – a short-range laser gun, bombs, and “dash” to allow you to move faster. And you will definitely need ‘em. Complete all eleven screens, and who knows what you might discover!

Very sadly the programmer Ollie Doughty passed away in April. These pages are dedicated to his memory. Rest in peace Stepz and thank you.



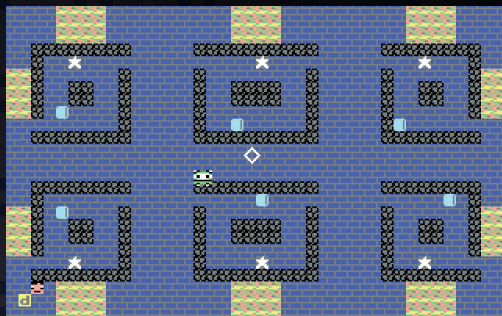
As a massive *Vectrex* fan, I was far more familiar with Ollie through his chiptune work on several recent homebrews than his programming skills. *Rambler* is the single-screen equivalent of *Rick Dangerous* – there will be an awful lot of rote learning, pattern recognition, puzzle pondering, dying, gnashing of teeth, air turning blue, and broken joystick replacing before the denouement of reaching each screen’s exit. It probably wouldn’t be so frustrating if there were checkpoints throughout each level, but you restart each screen. Every. Single. Damn. Time. And yet, there is a sadistic, almost masochistic addictiveness to retrying, probably because there’s no score, no lives, it’s simply about bludgeoning your way to the very end. Anyone with patience levels below a saint should however steer clear!





I think by year end, ZZAP! will be looking for a new team

member if games like *Rambler* keep getting released. My heart can't take the demands of pixel-perfect movement followed by mad rushing around. And then there's homing aliens, of which my advice is to just leg it (or head it, if you prefer). This game is unforgiving, you hear me, unforgiving! If your precision movement game isn't up to scratch then you're in for a slog. I managed level 4 (or 5? I forget, so many lives lost) before my nervous system gave up. Perversely, I found it a great game. Ultra-efficient graphics and a vertical difficulty curve aside, progress is rewarding, there's variety with power-ups, and, believe it or not, it's fun to play. Many may give up without getting past the first screen but stick with it and there's a great arcade puzzler in there!



While paying sincere respect to Stepz, I did find

this a bit of a difficult game to get on with. The presentation is generally good, with a cute tune on the title screen and some interesting small sprites. However, the gameplay has some flaws in my opinion. The pixel-perfect positioning and timing required to grab some stars can be off-putting; especially when coupled with enemies that move in a random and unpredictable pattern. I wanted to love it but there was little drawing me back to play again; it just reminded me too much of very early C64 games that were punishingly difficult with little variation between levels. A valiant effort though.



PRESENTATION: 64%

Simple and pleasant little title screen.

GRAPHICS: 63%

Efficient, effective, and nicely detailed for what they are.

SOUND: 58%

An enjoyable sounding title tune, and a few sound effects get the job done.

HOOKABILITY: 70%

Easy to pick up but a bit too punishing to keep some coming back for more punishment.

LASTABILITY: 75%

Later levels add a little to the formula, but it sure is challenging – and we like a challenge.

OVERALL 76%

Classic design with promise but may be too difficult for some. We'll stop Rambling on now.

"C'MON, CHAPS
GIVE US A BREAK!"



SIDly The Best

We've given legendary Graftgold composer and sound designer
Jason Page his very own Page, erm, Pages. Time to change your name Jason!

What made the SIDs from the greats such as Rob Hubbard, Martin Galway, and Ben Daglish so unique? I can pinpoint two things: Firstly,



Rob Hubbard

those gents are very, VERY good at creating music. Secondly, their music routines – the code that processes their music and finally sends the result of their talent to 24 bytes of audio RAM. The code that they used to do this

part is like a fingerprint, unique to their own personalities. It does what they needed it to do to get their music out to the masses.

Consider percussion: Many of Rob's earlier tunes didn't contain kick drums at all. Take a listen to *Monty On The Run* and *Commando*. The snare drives the music. This frees up more opportunities to use those valuable 3 channels for other purposes. Also, the use of percussive ring modulation effects are a trait that can easily identify a SID as being one of his. Originally, the snare was simple white noise, played at alternating octaves. It was the same code used for many of his instruments.



Martin Galway



"IF HE'S
ON THE
RUN
I'LL
GET
HIM"

Martin Galway's music rarely contained any percussion either (ignoring the sample-based *Arkanoid* and *Combat School*). The lack of any white noise at all is also partly what gives Martin's music its charm. He also rarely (never?) succumbed to "white noise at the beginning of bass notes" that is still common in today's SIDs to obtain a free hi-hat. Was this a deliberate decision, a limitation to Galway's unique C64 audio routine, or both? Does the "Enter your name" drum solo in *Rambo* show the full percussive potential of his music player? How would the percussion have changed his music if Martin had added it? We may never know.

Later versions of Rob's music player did contain kick drums, with code specially for kick and snare using somewhat complex waveform and pitch tables (every music update, a new waveform and pitch could be set), as heard in the classic *Sanxion*, and *Delta*. This method is still used in today's SID composing tools.





Galway's epics such as *Parallax* went some way to creating a somewhat psychedelic soundscape. However, these were more akin to 70s prog rock synthesiser extravaganzas. Rob's *Delta* in-game (a rendition of a track from Phillip Glass's *Koyaanisqatsi* soundtrack) and the first half of *Knucklebusters* were other examples of atmosphere. But compared to

A number of Rob's SIDs contain slight variations in their code to allow for a new effect, whilst removing something else that wasn't needed. For example, the downward pitching arpeggiated sound in *Crazy Comets* was a unique piece of code (the same effect can also go upwards, as heard in *Phantom Of The Asteroid*). At some point, Rob removed this code and it was never to return.

It's not just Rob and Martin. You could identify a Ben Daglish, a Fred Gray, and certainly a Maniacs of Noise, by the sounds alone. Although, melody and song structure were king. We remember those games and pieces of audio due to the tunes themselves.

Creating a moody orchestralesque underscore – as heard in many of today's games – wasn't really possible. Some of

Martin's sound routine, Rob's didn't lend itself well to long, ambient styles – and you can hear that when comparing the music that they both produced.



Today we don't have such limitations for writing music in games. It can be streamed easily, with CPU's being able to decode MP3s or Vorbis files. Time, care, and attention can be spent on getting the little details right, rather than fighting to get a 6 minute track into 6K of RAM.

Maybe that's progression, but at the same time, we lost something very special along the way.



Price: \$free digital

Developer: H4plo (2023)

Link: mysl.nl/puYN

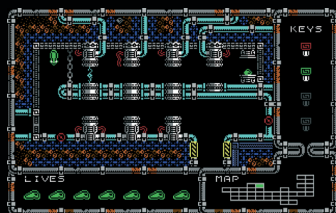


I want to break free. I want to break free from this lab, it's not very fab, I don't need it, I want to break free. Maker knows, maker knows I want to break free. And so, Ooze does. Only problem, what next? There's an awful lot of hazards about, robot guards, and nasty traps. Fortunately, Ooze is blessed with the ability to reverse his gravity and fly upwards onto new platforms which should help navigate some of these problems. The rest... well, that's down to skill alone.

Control Ooze left and right by moving the joystick, and press fire to flip his local gravity between up and down. Don't touch any of the guards, electric fields, crushers, or gas vents though, otherwise a life is lost. Thankfully, a life is gained every time you collect green blobs of ooze, or insert one of the four coloured keys into the computer terminal, which disables the forcefields blocking new areas. Can you ooze your way to the exit and escape to victory?

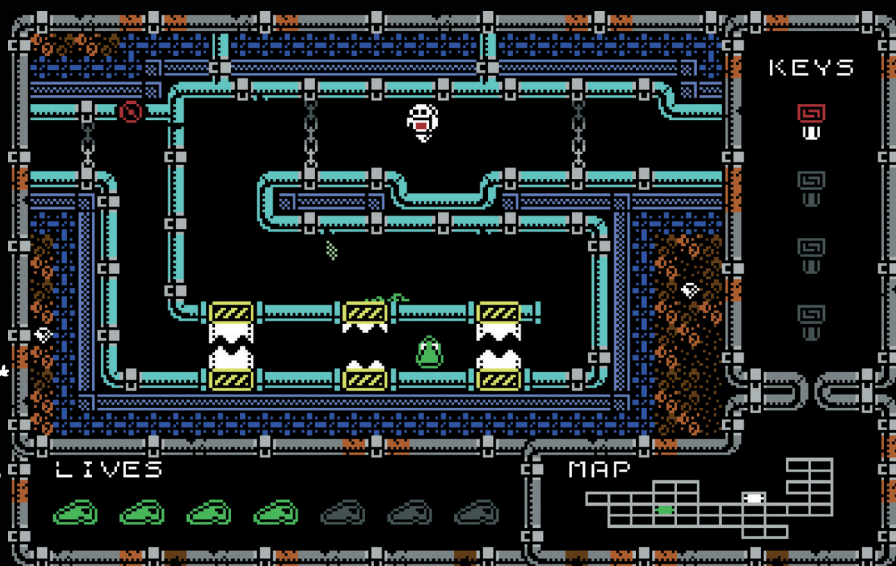
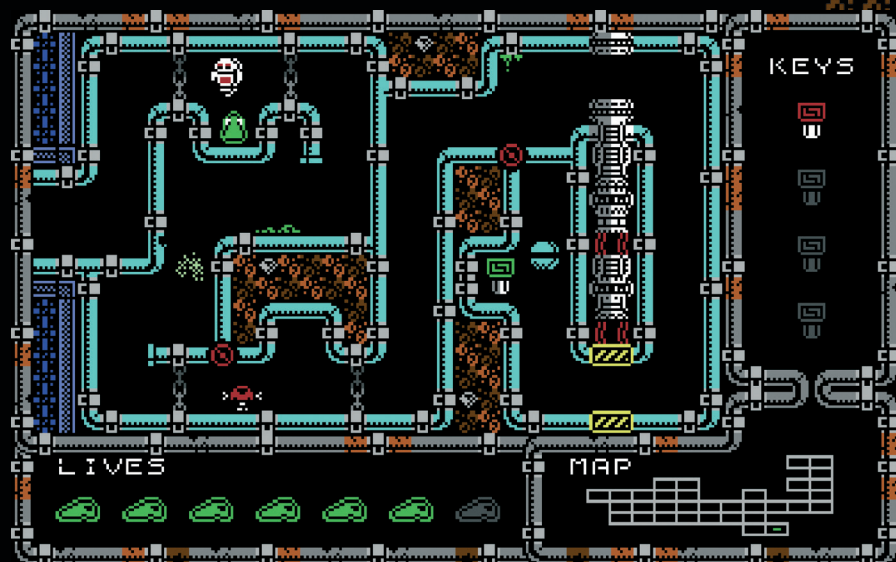


Ooze on the surface seems to be some sort of spiritual successor to *Steg the Slug* – they look similar, have similar movement mechanics, but thankfully no frustrating bubble blowing! Speaking of Rob Hubbard, some of the hazards also have a *Monty Mole*-like finesse to them, especially the sawblade doors. Grasping the gravity flip concept doesn't take long, with the first few screens being a gentle intro. It looks cute, has tons of endearment, sounds good, and having watched a long (short?) play of the Spectrum version, I appreciate the extra work gone into improving the Commodore port. Ultimately it won't take a lot of effort to reach the end, despite some well-planned hazards and layouts, but you will certainly enjoy the ride.





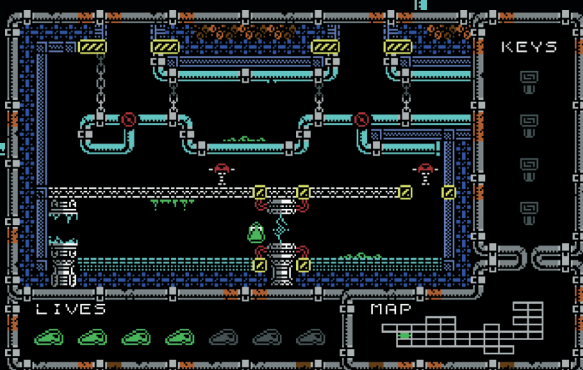
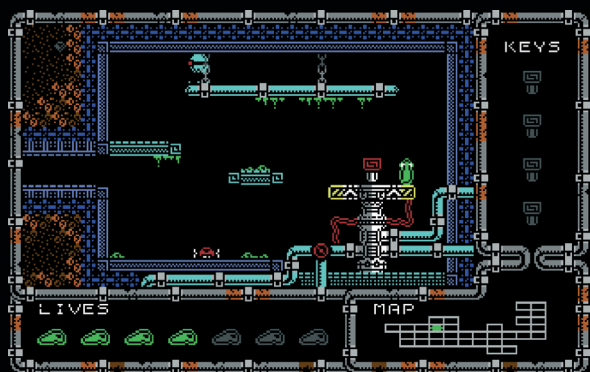
TEST



Slick movevz"

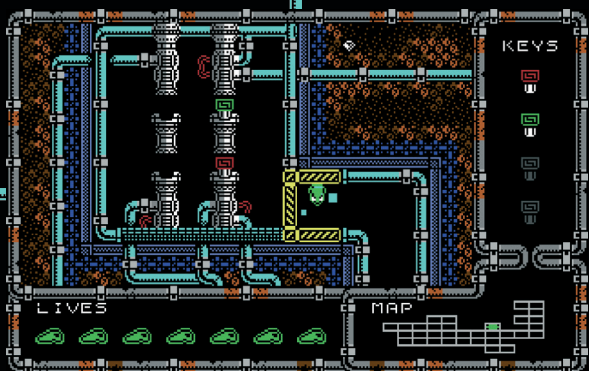
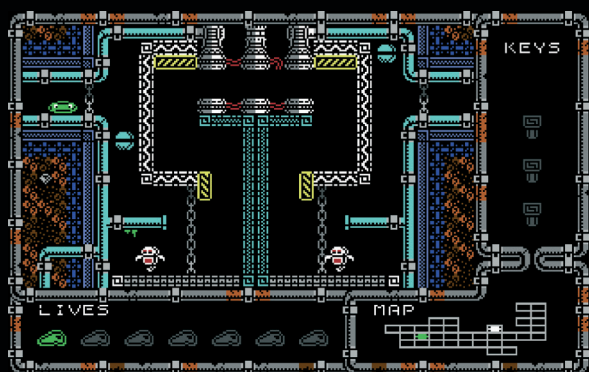


I had played Andy Johns' Spectrum original and enjoyed it – it reminded me strongly of Terry Cavanagh's indie hit *WWWW* (which got a great C64 conversion; check that out if you like this game). Haplo has done a great job with the C64 *Ooze* too, with excellent animation and a spooky background tune. Control feels spot on and I soon made progress through the challenging screens. In fact, that was my biggest concern – it's not a huge game, even when the design makes you backtrack to insert the keys. But other than a secret room to discover, there is little incentive to go back now I have completed it. It is well-made and fun to master, but I would have loved more screens to ooze around.





TEST



PRESENTATION: 82%

Music or SFX choice, mini-map, scrolling help, a hidden room to find, and end screen.

GRAPHICS: 82%

Similar to the Spectrum with more colour, the main sprite is great, and the backgrounds are well made.

SOUND: 82%

A classic Haplo mournful, atmospheric piece plays throughout, with reasonable SFX.

HOOKABILITY: 86%

Dropping into and up the first screen is fun.

LASTABILITY: 77%

It's not the longest of games, and once completed, there's no compelling reason to return.

OVERALL 80%

It's not easy being green, but this is an addictive aardvark that begs for a larger version to be created.

Like Mat, I immediately thought of *Steg the Slug* when this loaded up. The gameplay and objectives are totally different, though, so you haven't exactly seen it all before. The graphics are lovely, although there's not a lot of variety. As far as the game itself goes, it's not what you would call difficult, as long as you take your time, evaluate the situation and proceed with caution. Do that, and you'll reach the end before you know it. Even with the secret room to discover, there's no real incentive to come back, but you'll enjoy it all the way until then. This is a game that oozes charm, but lacks challenge and longevity.



BAGMAN

STRIKES BACK

Price: \$free digital

Developer: LC-Games (2022)

Link: mysl.nl/tuQA



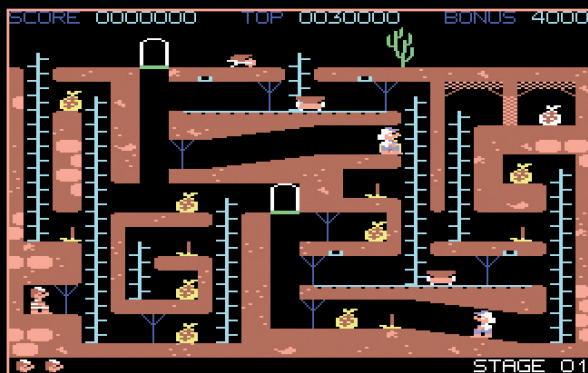
Not content with raiding the eight-level mine in his previous escapade, *Bagman* has discovered an even deeper mine with even more screens; twenty-four to be precise. It is time to strike back, strike hard, and not only get enough money to retire forever, but help his friends and family too.

Play mechanics are precisely as before. The objective is to manoeuvre *Bagman* through the various mine shafts, pick up the money bags, and place them in a wheelbarrow at the surface of the mine. You must avoid the pursuing guards, moving ore carts, and descending elevators. Thankfully, *Bagman* can temporarily stun the guards by striking them with a pickaxe (ouch!), or by dropping/sliding a money bag on them when they are below you. Pickaxes are also used to break down walls that obstruct passages.

Well, if I wasn't expecting the remake, I certainly didn't think there'd be a sequel. Maybe there'll be a trequel? Can this main character 'carrier' franchise? Maybe this is a 'brief case' of Luca getting carried away? Either way, there's nothing 'duff-le' about it, even if it is more of the same. Luca has certainly come up 'clutch' this time, as it's just as much fun as his first *Bagman* game. If you liked that one, you'll love this. Will he 'shoulder' the responsibility of making a third one? If you think so, get yourself down to the 'tote' and bet on it!



"PUN - DEONIUM!"



It's like *Minecraft* but without the creepers. But don't mention the ghosts, they don't exist... do they?!



TEST

If you followed my comments about *Tutankham Returns* compared to the original release, then they pretty much also apply here regarding *Bagman Strikes Back* compared to its original, albeit I was never quite taken with it as I was Konami's Egyptian masterpiece. The new screens are well designed and fit in with the theme and construction of the arcade, and the same nice touches are retained, including plodding even slower with the white bag of gold! I was generally playing on Normal difficulty, and I can imagine Hard taking some serious practice to venture far into the game. You will just have to decide if the vast number of extra screens is your bag, man.





"I THINK SOMEONE IS PURSE-DING ME..."



THIS GAME IS A TRIBUTE TO
BAGMAN, AN ARCADE GAME
RELEASED BY VALADON
AUTOMATION IN 1982.
IT IS ALSO THE SEQUEL TO
BAGMAN COMES BACK.

THIS VERSION IS MADE UP OF
24 COMPLETELY NEW STAGES.

AUTHOR: LC-GAMES
LUCCARMINATT1987@GMAIL.COM

PRESS FIRE TO CONTINUE

I enjoyed Luca's remake of *Bagman* and gave it a good review, so much of what I said in issue 9 applies to this update. There are 24 new levels to work through, but at the higher difficulty levels, you won't be seeing a lot of them. I do like the little extra touches he has added, from the textures on the cavern walls to the cacti on the surface. The whole look and sound of the game are dated, but there is a real challenge for greedy gamers here to grab the gold - if that's your bag, man. (Do I get the sack for making the same pun as Mat?)



PRESENTATION: 86%

Great menu with instructions, choice of difficulties and saveable high score table.

GRAPHICS: 40%

Like something from a 40-year-old arcade game. Oh, wait...

SOUND: 26%

Equally ancient and decrepit, yet authentic sounds.

HOOKABILITY: 85%

Easier to get into than the first game, due to familiarity.

LASTABILITY: 80%

No less interesting or challenging, and importantly, fun!

OVERALL 81%

An equally baignificent entry into what's become a great arcade "tribute" series.



"STAY STILL DAMMIT!"



It's that time again and with this issue's deadline looming, there's nothing like pressure to get the creative juices flowing, so without further ado let's

throw the doors wide to our pocket-sized gallery and stroll single-file through the halls while perusing the candidates on show today. Follow me!

Neon City by Sulevi | 2023

There's all manner of things here to enjoy in as fine a hi-res image as one could wish for. The scene is set in what appears to be one of the less-salubrious parts of town; the red-light district if I'm not mistaken. Girls with heart shaped features lurk in doorways and a giant sexy hologram lights the left side of the street, advertising all manner of forbidden delights.

The neon sign top-right doesn't seem to be in any known language but if you squint it does suggest the word "flesh", or perhaps that's me overthinking matters [*Setting up a Rorschach test for you now – Ed*].

Centre stage we have two exceptionally incongruous figures caught in the spotlight from a dark and looming sphere in the skies. A woman with a trenchcoat and a hairstyle reminiscent of Rachael from *Bladerunner* stands holding the hand of what can only be a humanoid frog creature.

It's bold, it's bright, it's baffling. Ridley Scott has a lot to answer for.



There Is No Love Left In The World by Razorback | 2023

Great lines, beautiful use of colour, and the lighting is superb. Macabre subject matter aside, the mastery of pixels on display here is exceptional.

There is a subtlety of line combined with powerful imagery that is a visual treat. Is this a construct in the form of something demonic or an actual beast rising from the pits? Either way it's superbly crafted, with the interplay of shadows and gentle highlights making for a bold image.



The beams piercing the clouds are amazing; kissing the edges of the giant head and playing delicately around the robed figure caught in the action of worship or summoning.

A fantastic addition to our gallery.

Pik'n Mix

Price: \$free digital

Developer: Simon Jameson / Arlasoft (2022)

Link: mysl.nl/OnMJ



Let's get into the sugary world of Pik 'n' Mix. This game features thirty-three single-screen levels where your mission is to gain weight by devouring enemies and activating switches.

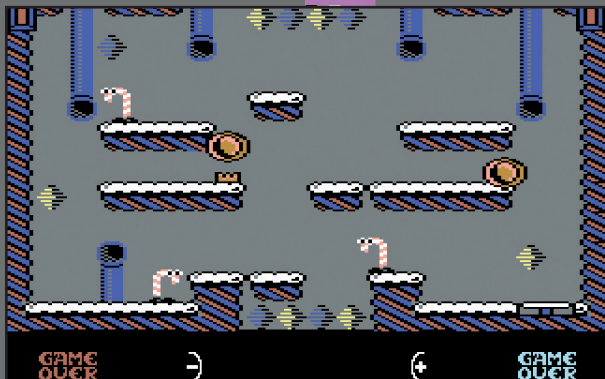
Play solo or team up with a friend to stun enemies with paintballs, gulp them down, and grow bigger. Paint platforms in your colour for strategic advantages. Discover power-ups like trainers for speed, shields for invincibility, and the yin-yang symbol to swap colours. Jump higher with the spring and freeze foes with the clock. Watch out for the crown though – wearing it at the level's end brings bonuses, but it can be knocked off by enemies or while eating.

Ready to indulge in the sweet world of Pik 'n' Mix? Tuck in and have a blast!



This game was created by Shallan50K (Simon Jameson) during a series of Twitch broadcasts on how to code a C64 game. Watch the series here: bit.ly/piknmix-coding

Arlasoft added the final touches, including an NTSC version, and published the game to itch.io. Donations to Great Ormond Street are appreciated, with a physical version planned for later in 2023. Sweet!





LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL!



TEST



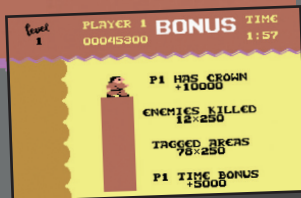
I love the sprites in this; the way they consume the bad guys and gain weight. It has the feel of classic single-screen games, and the pace soon picks up with more enemies onscreen. The platform painting mechanic almost feels like it comes from a different game, but you get used to it and the controls. Competing against another player for the crown leads to some great tussles as you head for the exit. High in calories and fun.



I appreciate the other guys' love of the classic platform action but this one wasn't as sweet for me. I found there's not a lot to this game to keep me going. You complete a level by shooting and eating the enemies, and get some bonus points for changing the platform colours. Oh and the screen shakes as he jumps around. Other than that, am I missing something? If you had to change the platform colour too in order to progress then that would have been a hefty challenge – maybe a bit too hard but it would have kept me at it longer. However, as it stands, its long term appeal is a bit thin on the ground for me. Best played two-player though.



A whole King Pot Noodle? You fat bloater! So went the advert tagline, but our protagonist here could easily eat ten then ask what's for main course. The screen layout, foe movement, and platform navigation reminded me of *Toy Bizarre* (a "hidden" Activision favourite), but it's a lot more colourful for starters. You also move slower the heavier you are! [*Just like real life then – Ed*] The main job of consuming your foes gets trickier as you progress, but the secondary "paint the floors" quest to gain as many bonus points as possible is great if you're into chasing high scores. The two-player competitive angle also prolongs the longevity. Great for short bursts of play, *Pik n Mix* is Woolworth it. [*That ASDA be the worst pun I've heard – Ed*]



PRESENTATION: 85%

Explains how to play, two-player mode, and high score saver.

GRAPHICS: 80%

Chubby Gristle inspired sprites waddle around Mayhem's worst nightmare, chubbier than ever.

SOUND: 79%

Upbeat jolly tunes belie the horror of rampant food consumption.

HOOKABILITY: 85%

Jump, shoot, eat, it's all in the mind, erm stomach.

LASTABILITY: 70%

Eventually gets repetitive but the two-player option adds value.

OVERALL 75%

The treat you can eat between meals (games) without ruining your appetight (belt).



DEATHFLOOD

Price: \$free digital / €25 upwards physical

Developer: Windigo Productions (2023)

Link: mysl.nl/WEIlg



DUNGEON OF DOOM



Treasure hunting, treasure hunting never changes. Take you for example; you thought the hard part was making it inside the necromancer's lair, but in doing that you've triggered a trap that causes the entire dungeon to slowly fill up with water. So, not only are you collecting treasure and killing the patrolling monsters, but trying not to drown in the process!

Deathflood sees you control either a barbarian, Mr Stabby Stabby good at fighting, or an Amazon, light on her feet, can jump further, and offers free next day delivery. Oh wait. Anyway, both can run, climb ladders, and attack monsters, but beware the hazards that will sap a health point. If you go underwater you move slower and use up your air supply; run out of air and another health point is gone. And we don't want to lose all those, do we?

Keys must be collected to open doors (obvs), there are switches to open barriers, potions grant an



Some years ago, a friend of mine wrote a twisted little game called *The Wicked Father* for the Atari VCS, and *Deathflood* brought memories of that modern classic, erm, flooding back. The flooding rooms are familiar, but the rest of it is greatly expanded over that 4K frolic, with far more to do in the game. Playing it can be just as frustrating though, but for different reasons. Although the idea is a good one, the controls are too finicky and unrefined to allow the game's promise to be fulfilled. It's a shame, because there's definitely room on the C64 for a panic-inducing platformer. I'd love to see this one tweaked and polished, because it does have potential.



Initially you may find yourself in over your head (gurgle gurgle), but I enjoyed playing it and would have played more had it not been for several gripes. The ladder climbing and dismount is finicky, it takes too long to run, and the barbarian really is a lousy jumper - miss a simple gap and you can fall to the bottom of the level with no escape from the rising water until you drown. Each level can and will have several possible routes and "solutions", reflected in the endings you can attain and depending on which character you are playing. It's a deceptively deeper (hah) and more challenging title than first impressions may allude to, but hindered in its execution by a slight lack of polish and refinement to iron out the aforementioned niggles.

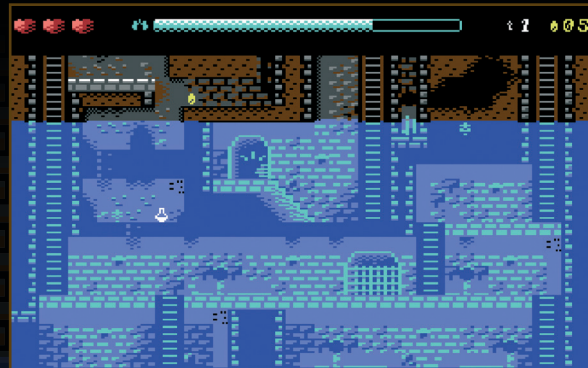
extra health point, with plenty of choices to make before you reach each exit. Survive all nineteen rooms to

escape, and you're granted one of six ranks depending on how you perform, you ranker.





TEST



PRESENTATION: 84%

Two great manuals (PDF and onscreen), character choice, and very good presentation screens.

GRAPHICS: 69%

The water effect works well, and there are good animated tiny characters, but the background graphics need more variety.

SOUND: 78%

Very effective music throughout, but the FX are damp squibs.

HOOKABILITY: 71%

The unusual game mechanic fosters the desire to explore.

LASTABILITY: 63%

Backtracking and fiddly controls add an artificial difficulty that's offputting.

OVERALL 68%

An ambitious debut that fell short of the depths that could have been. Wat-er shame.



The intro and idea were initially impressive to me, and it seemed like this was going to be great. But I soon found a few issues. The barbarian's jumps are feeble and the change of running speed feels inconsistent. The Amazon jumps better but takes longer to defeat enemies. It's also easy to get caught on ladders and not make it onto a platform cleanly. The water effect itself is quite clever, reminding me of the Amiga's *The Killing Game Show*. Although there are extra touches like the switches introduced here, level layouts quickly become very tough and that discouraged me from playing further. The controls need further polishing, with pushing down to use the exit being particularly annoying. So near and yet so far... I'll drown my sorrows with a better platform game instead.

"IT'S HIGH TIDE I GET OUT OF HERE"



ZZAP! 64 Micro Action | 51

Paul Davies looks back at the original Issue #15 of some zine called ZZAP!



Oh, there's something on the cover here that's got me all hot under the collar. Phew. I can't take my eyes off it. I mean, don't you feel the same? Just a glance and you're hooked, right? Can't wait to grab hold of the mag, hold it to your chest tightly and embrace it. Can you believe how lucky we are to get such a cover? A cover that tells you... that

there's A STARQUAKE MAP INSIDE??? Be still my beating heart *comes over all funny* I think I need a sit down.

Where was I? Oh yes, the front cover. There are reviews of *Sentinel*, *Boulderdash III*, along with a lady licking an ice lolly; which, going by the caption alongside it, suggests there's a review of *Leaderboard* too. They'll do anything to try and make golf look exciting, won't they?

Turn the page and we learn that also in this issue is a feature on all of the latest budget games released this month (thirteen pages worth – crumbs!), the Compunet Art Gallery, and the other regulars such as



the Reader's Top 30, The Terminal Man, and ZZAP! Tips. Hopefully there are some other games to look at along with a Sizzler or two.

Up first is not quite a Sizzler, but it's everyone's favourite cartoon sailor (is there another one?), *Popeye*. He now has his own game on the 64 and it looks rather fun, if not rather Specy-like, though this may be down to its origins on that particular machine.



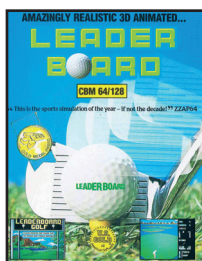
Let's not hold that against it though, as it still looks good as you take control of said disfigured-armed sailor, as he (as always in the cartoon) bids to win the heart of Olive Oyl by collecting the twenty-five hearts that have been left scattered around the town. Will he ever give up? She never really seems that into him in the cartoons, always

blowing hot and cold and she never really says no to Brutus. Give it up, *Popeye*! Move on. If she can resist those, erm 'manly' arms and tattoos of yours, then you've got no chance. Anyway, see your way through many puzzles and collect those mentioned hearts and Ms Oyl is all yours. If only love was that simple in real life, eh? Moving on...

Next comes the game that has got ZZAP! very excited. Excited enough to put it on the cover (no, not *Starquake* unfortunately) and give it a five-page review; it's *Leaderboard*. Five pages? See, I told you they'll do anything to try and make golf interesting. If it's not a lady eating a lolly, it's a huge review. I know which I prefer. *Starquake*. Anyway, let's take a look and see what's so interesting about golf, shall we? There are four different courses [*hors d'oeuvres, appetiser, main course, and dessert? I don't get golf – Ed*] all of which have 18 holes, wind elements to contend with [*that'll be the four courses*], and you can also choose your handicap. Additionally, you have fourteen clubs to choose from on your com-putter. Exciting stuff. If you like golf. There's a whole section here too on aiming, getting your

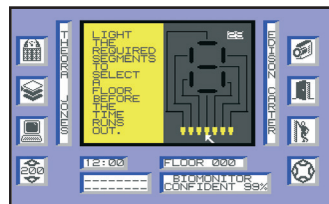
power right, etc., so there's a lot going on. But I have to say the most interesting part for me is that both the disk and cassette versions only require one load.

ZZAP! happily report that during gameplay on the disk version, they did not have to wait for any additional data to be loaded during gameplay, so the only real benefit of paying the extra cash for the disk, is that the initial load is quicker. Maybe golf can be interesting after all! On top of that, US Golf I mean Gold have confirmed that they will be releasing tournament disks in the future, each containing an additional four courses that can be used with *Leaderboard*. They should



be out by now! So I take it back, golf is interesting in some respects, though mainly relating to computational things. Though if you do actually like it, you'd better go and get yourself a copy of *Leaderboard* as it's likely the best golf game you'll play. 97%?! Now that's worth paying £14.95 for.

Hey, it's Ed's favourite; *Max Headroom*! No, he hasn't just walked through my door – he's arrived on the 64. Well, his game has anyway, which is a great reason to get excited... isn't



it? I would have thought so anyway, given I'm a fan of his sideways look on the world and his stuttering cathartic ramblings. This game, though, is based on the *Max Headroom* movie as opposed to his famous TV show. There was a movie? Apparently, there was and now it's your chance to play it but, this may not be as exciting as first thought. It may look quite interesting and have some nice music to listen to, but it falls rather short when it comes to gameplay. You control TV reporter Edison Carter as he wanders around the building in which Max is being held after being kidnapped, solving puzzles, and attempting to collect numerous pieces of code. The codes are used to 'crack' each of the rooms' electrically-controlled doors, allowing you access to each floor of the building, in each of which you must search

"I
DON'T
GET
GOLF"



to try and find old Max before time runs out. Robots supervise and wander around each floor, surveying the place for intruders (yes, that means you), and will shoot on sight. Pew! Overall, the game is a bit of a damp squib – more Min Headroom than maximum – and even the most ardent of *M-M-Max* fans may struggle to find any pleasure in playing this. That's n-n-n-n-n-n-n-n-not what Ed wanted to hear.

Video Killed The Radio Star' is what The Buggles famously sang, but what did Biggles ever sing? Probably nothing, though

you pedants out there) of *Biggles'* famous Sopwith Camel biplane, as you take on the enemies *Scramble*-style manoeuvring about the place, avoiding getting shot down while at the same time aiming to take them down instead. Fun. The other sub-games include a *Green Beret*-style level, the third involves *Biggles* and a friend running from the po-po, leaping from rooftop to rooftop. Odd. Anyway, the second game doesn't have an actual title, it seems, but this time *Biggles* is in control of a helicopter (is

there nothing this man can't fly?) in a 3D-based flight simulator. The aim here is to shoot the bad guys, collect some hostages and seek out the evil Hun's secret weapon, and destroy it. This

all sounds rather exciting though unfortunately, ZZAP! insists that neither of these games is very good. That's a shame, for two reasons; one, because I actually liked reading *Biggles* so I was hoping for a good adaptation on the 64, and two, because it took me bloody ages to write all this for nothing. Note to self: Read the rating before going into a long, detailed explanation of a game. Lesson learned.

'nothing' is all I got when trying to think of a humorous segue into the next game to be looked at. It is indeed *Biggles* (not Buggles) time! And it's time to take to the air and fly around doing loop-de-loops, or something. The game itself is actually a two-parter with each section being a separate game in its own right. The first is named *Timewarp* (again?) and is set out into three different sections. The first of these puts you in the driving seat (or flying seat for all



With all that in mind, I'm going to stay well away from *World Cup Carnival*. Never before have I read that a game should be, "thrown into a deep dark hole and left to die". Oof – harsh words indeed. And to think some readers think ZZAP! is too hard on games today. Pff. Make of the review what you will but I see that as a warning that £10 would be better spent elsewhere, and you should too.

Aahh, there it is. Glorious. A hand-drawn map of one the greatest games to grace the C64 – *Starquake*. Its hundreds of screens are beautifully drawn together (literally) over two pages with a brilliant-looking explosion in the background. Breathe it in, everyone. BASK IN ITS GLORY! Who needs posters of glamour models on their walls when this beauty can get your heart racing with just one glance?



Before I get too carried away, let's look at this bumper edition of budget game reviews. We all know that £2.99 can sometimes be a decent gamble – that level of money spent can occasionally unearth a classic you weren't expecting. We also know that even at a low price, some games can still lead us to feel ripped off. So, what of the plethora of £2.99 or less games this month that ZZAP! has taken the trouble to review? Are they any gems hiding out there? Or are they all duff?

We're off to a promising start with *HES Games* from Americana, which is another one of those multi-event sporting titles, which requires a good old joystick wiggle, and your accuracy... though obviously not at the same time. There's the 100M Sprint, 100M Hurdles, Archery, Weight Lifting, and a few others, so plenty to keep you entertained. The ZZAP! guys love it, awarding a massive 95%. So if you

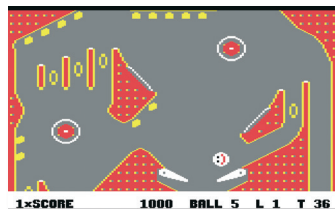


fancy wagging your joystick, then do it in the comfort and privacy of your own bedroom. With *HES Games*, I mean. What did you think I meant?

Next up are a few where you really would think, even at £1.99, you'd be asking your shopkeeper for your money back, please. Yes, there is plenty here to stay well away from, and being the kind fellow I am, I'll read them out to you. *Conan* picks up only 28%, *Neutral Zone* – from the makers of *Leaderboard* – which collects only 9 – YES 9%! Yowsers in the trousers. To be that bad must take some kind of effort right? Is it odd that it also wants to make me play it just to find out? As long as I don't have to part with any cash for it. Next on the list to avoid is *Booty* which you may remember from the Spectrum as it had good reviews... but not here mates. 16% yarr. More like Yikes. What could have possibly gone wrong with this conversion? A lot.

Many of the poorly-rated games seem to be coming from the software house Americana. *New York City*, *Scrolls of Abaddon*, *Moon Shuttle*, *Shamus* - the list goes on. But it's not all

doom and gloom for them as they have an ace up their sleeve, and it goes by the name of *Slamball*. It's is a pinball simulator that pushes all the right buttons, pulls all the right knobs (hey, grow up!), and bashes all the right corners. You're meant to do that to pinball machines, aren't you? Well, anyway, it's a great game to while away many hours of your life, thanks to its well-done ball physics and general playability, with ZZAP!



awarding it a Sizzler at a score of 96%. Wow. Well done, Americana. You've redeemed yourself from all of those terrible games named above. *Two Out of Three Ain't Bad*, that other American, Meatloaf once sang – one out of one hundred doesn't really have the same ring to it though.

So, we're here again. The sad end I mean, so it's time to bid you all adieu and thank you again for reading all about the good, the bad, and the boring (yes, I do mean golf). Though looking back, it was mainly bad. Apologies for that. I blame Americana.





RESEARCH PROJECT: Binary code addiction as a means of controlling the world

HEAD SCIENTIST: PROF. NORMAN NUTZ PhD, BSc, KP

RESEARCH EQUIPMENT: C64, MEGA65, CRAY-2

LAB ASSISTANT: The Geek

Let's end with an Adventure. And how are you, my fellow adventurers?

What are you up to? Have you been exploring ancient caves by the flickering light of a torch? Dark dungeons and long-forgotten places on the trail of dark secrets, hidden under the dust of many centuries? If not, then I have good news for you.

Soon you will be able to do all this. Stefan Vogt has now finished work on his game "*The Ghosts of Blackwood Manor*", and backers of the Kickstarter campaign will be able to play it first. The game was originally planned as a mini-adventure but Stefan decided instead to expand the game into a monumental experience of interactive fiction, with three possible endings based on the choices you make. The long

wait was worth it, so you can be very excited.

As Stefan says, the game will be released shortly after the crowdfunding campaign ends, for all those who didn't have the chance to get the perk through the Fusion Retro Books Kickstarter. So much for that. But today we're going to take a trip underwater first. In space. Sounds unusual? It is indeed. And it's all revealed in our *A1RL0CK* feature...

ADVENTURE REVIEW

A1RL0CK

SpaceWhale | Marco Innocenti | 2023 | \$free/donate | bit.ly/3rDERIL



Let's start this feature with a disclaimer. *A1RL0CK* is not your regular adventure game. And Marco Innocenti [until proven guilty – Ed] is not your regular adventure author. Marco is renowned in the modern interactive fiction scene and his famous, award-winning *Andromeda* games are nothing short of masterpieces. With *A1RL0CK*, Marco fulfilled a long-standing dream: returning to his first love, the Commodore 64. Growing up as a Commodore kid in 1980s Italy, Marco's passion for 8-bit machines is no surprise. Italy had a vibrant home computer scene and these days the Italian retro community is strong. Some of you know that Italy had their very own version of ZZAP! [Pizzap? – Ed], with the first issue being published in 1986. So ZZAP! had a major impact on

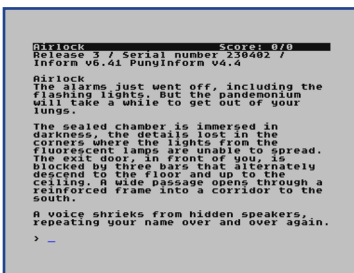
young Marco Innocenti.

These are wonderful times for retro adventure enthusiasts as modern interactive fiction is written differently,

with the story unfolding while you play – a contemporary approach for interactive stories, which is refreshing to see being delivered to classic 8-bit and 16-bit systems. And Marco's *A1RL0CK* is the perfect

an incident occurred which resulted in the station now being in emergency mode. A mysterious voice shrieks through hidden speakers, calling your name, giving instructions, and unfolding a little bit more information about the environment. Apart from that, you have no idea who you are, where you are, and most importantly what the bloody hell is going on. Also, where are your parents? And this is what makes this adventure special; there is no clear goal ahead. The story is being served piece by piece as you dive (ahem) deeper into the mysteries of the underwater station. But it wouldn't be a Marco Innocenti game if there weren't twists in the plot.

Spoilers ahoj. The first one that blew my mind was when I learned that the station, Oceanus Prime, is not on Earth. Instead, you are on Titan, one of the moons orbiting Saturn. And so what



fusion between classic and modern adventure games. In *A1RL0CK* you play a young girl named Chloe. Your game starts – which might not be much of a surprise considering the game's name – in an airlock. You notice quickly that you are trapped in an underwater station, which you cannot leave, and it's very obvious

starts as a harmless plot where you believe your parents might be scientists on Oceanus Prime and your goal is to escape and reunite with them, mutates into a science fiction thriller that step by step adds more horror layers while the oppressive and captivating story progresses. And when I say it adds more horror

elements I really mean:
 This game is definitely not
 suitable for children as it
 explores themes of both
 physical and psychological
 violence. Weren't expecting
 that were you.



```

Airlock                               Score: 0/2
> listen
Someone is shouting orders over the base
loudspeakers.

The voice that's all around you gets
softer: "CHLOE," it says, "FIRST YOU
NEED TO CALM DOWN. DO YOU HEAR ME,
CHLOE? DO YOU UNDERSTAND ME? YOU HAVE TO
CALM DOWN."

You take a couple of breaths and start
to feel the blood in your head subside.

> 1
You're carrying a suit (worn).

"THE SITUATION IS STABLE, CHLOE. NO
FURTHER SHOCKS ARE EXPECTED. THE DOOR
YOU'RE TRYING TO OPEN IS BOMBPROOF. IT
LEADS OUTSIDE AND YOU CAN'T OPEN IT
RIGHT NOW."

> _
  
```

The immersion in *A1RLOCK* is outstanding. I can't recall if there ever was an adventure game where the story sucked me in so fast *[airlocks will do that - Ed]*. And it didn't let me go until I solved the game. I was so captivated, I even dreamed about Chloe wandering around the forsaken corridors of Oceanus Prime. Not many games in my career have moved me so intensely.

I would say that the game consists of two parts, even though no message in *A1RLOCK* actually states "this is part 1" or "this is part 2". But there is that one door in the game and once you pass it, the gameplay has a different dynamic. So when you get to this point yourself, you will immediately know what I mean.

Let's talk about atmosphere. There is perhaps ironically tons of it in *A1RLOCK*, and you feel that there is a frightening, horrifying new revelation around every corner of this game. Marco's prose is so well written, which was expected since I know his modern work, and that alone makes playing *A1RLOCK* an exceptional experience.

The oppression and revelations, the captivating room descriptions, the way Chloe – who remains a mystery herself in the course of this game – interacts with her environment... all this is nothing but the true essence of what makes up an exceptionally well-crafted game.

```

North Bridge                          Score: 0/4
A dumbwaiter remains slanted in the west
wall, its shaft descending to the lower
floors.

"WE ARE APPROXIMATELY TWO KILOMETERS
BELOW THE SURFACE. IF THAT DOESN'T
WHICH IS CURRENTLY PREVENTED BY OUR
SECURITY FAILURES-- MILLIONS OF TONS OF
SEAWATER WOULD RUSH INTO THE FACILITY
AND DESTROY EVERYTHING. YOU YOURSELF
WOULD BE CRUSHED BY THE PRESSURE IN
MOMENTS."

> open closet door
No need to concern yourself with that.

"WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO NOW, CHLOE, IS GET
TO THE WARD--" The voice cuts off and,
after a brief static, it's silence.

You're alone now.

> _
  
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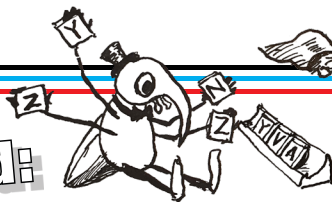
The puzzles in *A1RLOCK* are so well done, and far from being the average "find key to open door" concept. Even the brains of experienced adventure players are challenged here, because

the game is so different and does not necessarily comply with the common adventure conventions. This is what makes *A1RLOCK* one of the best adventures I have played. Ever.

Not many of the new wave of adventures released for retro systems I would consider as a true milestone. There was *Hibernated*, which kinda resurrected the modern retro adventure scene with the release of its classic version in 2016. Then there was *Blerk's Unhallowed*, the first game I consider being a perfect fusion of classic and modern elements. It threw away many conventions known from classic games, including compass directions, and focused much on experiencing a story.

And now there is *A1RLOCK*, a nearly perfect evolution and a great example of what adventure games on the Commodore 64 can be. Not only is it a true milestone, it's a glimpse into the future, a role model for great adventures ahead. We highly recommend *A1RLOCK* and honouring it with the Sizzler is a no-brainer. Get *A1RLOCK* now, and you'll never want to come up for air.

Atmosphere	94%
Puzzle Factor	92%
Interaction	93%
Lastability	90%
Overall	92%



Welcome to ZYZZYVA! #3. Wow, this is almost as old as original ZZAP! now. For those who are new here (hallo!) it's a way for us to bid a fond farewell to each issue. The weevil bug above named Yva is a Zyzzyva. Not only does that bug have a fittingly Zzappy name, Zyzzyva is literally the "last word" of the dictionary, and so Yva affords us the last word of the mag too. With that, and a big ol' spank you very much to everyone who contributed to this issue, here's the closing thoughts as we close the last page (sob).



Bounding Down?

I won't keep you in suspenders any more about this one. Whilst our 2023 reviewers' consensus was that *Bounder's* 97% score was a bit high, our scoring has always been subjective and down to the individual reviewer. That's the whole point of our unique review system eh? The lads at the time's scores were therefore "correct", simply because they came up with them.

Sure, we could re-score every game every year, but we've incredibly got enough new games to be going on with thank you! (You're welcome). It's one thing to award a posthumous Gold Medal as we did for *Wizball*, but stripping medals isn't something we want to get into the habit of and would feel rather unfair. Unless *Bounder* was found to have been using some sort of illicit substance like... grass?

Believe it or not we love giving great reviews when we can. So congrats *Bounder* – your score has rebounded! Anyone for tennis?



Oh Very Punny

Thanks to his side-splitting *Bagman Strikes Back* review, Paul Morrison has masterfully and stylishly bagged this issue's highly coveted "Master of Pun-demonium" position! His "bag" pun-tastic skills were truly on display, leaving us in stitches, and showing he's got the ZZAP! 64 pun game in the bag. With such talent, who will tote-ally grab the pun crown next month?

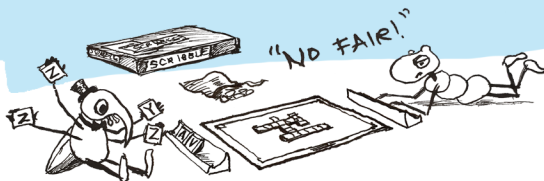
Max Nostalgia

Paul Davies' look back at *Max Headroom* genuinely unlocked a memory for me – of fondly playing the game in my bedroom. Yes in hindsight it probably wasn't great, but back then aged thirteen, I really felt like I was in the studio, racing against a deadline. Just like nowadays really heh. The m-m-more things change...

Till next time ZZAPpers, see you on the flip side of the disk! "B",



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